Theory and Interpretation of Narrative
James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz, Series Editors
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Earlier versions of much of the material in this book have previously appeared in print, and, although I have substantially revised much of it, I am grateful for permission from the publishers to draw on it here:

“Attributions of Madness in Ian McEwan’s *Enduring Love.*” *Style* 43.3 (2009).
SPEAKING BROADLY, there are two perspectives on the mind: the internalist and the externalist. These two perspectives form more of a continuum than an either/or dichotomy, but the distinction is, in general, a valid one.

- An internalist perspective on the mind stresses those aspects that are inner, introspective, private, solitary, individual, psychological, mysterious, and detached.
- An externalist perspective on the mind stresses those aspects that are outer, active, public, social, behavioral, evident, embodied, and engaged.

I use the term *social mind* to describe those aspects of the whole mind that are revealed through the externalist perspective.

It seems to me that the traditional narratological approach to the representation of fictional character is an internalist one that stresses those aspects that are inner, passive, introspective, and individual. This undue emphasis on private, solitary, and highly verbalized thought at the expense of all the other types of mental functioning has resulted in a preoccupation with such concepts as free indirect discourse, stream of consciousness, and interior monologue. As a result, the *social* nature of fictional thought has
been neglected. But, as Antonio Damasio suggests, “the study of human consciousness requires both internal and external views” (2000, 82), and so an externalist perspective is required as well, one that stresses the public, social, concrete, and located aspects of mental life in the novel.

As table 2.1 shows, a number of the concepts that are used to analyze the workings of fictional minds tend to fit easily into one or other of these perspectives. Some of these pairs oppose each other precisely; other pairings are much looser. The types of relationships within the pairings include opposition, complementarity, and intersection (as, for example, when an interior monologue shows evidence of Bakhtinian dialogicality). The term aspectuality, as mentioned in the previous chapter, refers to the fact that storyworlds are always experienced under some aspects and not others by the characters who inhabit them. People experience the same events in different ways. Within the internalist/externalist framework, I see focalization and aspectuality as complementing each other. Focalization occurs when the reader is presented with the aspect of the storyworld that is being experienced by the focalizer at that moment. In this context, the concept of aspectuality serves as a reminder that, meanwhile, the storyworld is also being experienced differently, under other aspects, by all of the characters who are not currently being focalized in the text. Any of those other characters could have been focalized if the author had chosen to do so. The term continuing consciousness, as I have said, stands for the process whereby readers create a continuing consciousness for a character out of the scattered, isolated mentions of that character in the text. The idea of continuing consciousnesses links nicely with the concepts of aspectuality and focalization. Other characters’

| TABLE 2.1 |
|---|---|
| **INTERNALIST PERSPECTIVE** | **EXTERNALIST PERSPECTIVE** |
| Private minds | Social minds |
| Intramental thought | Intermental thought |
| Personal identity | Situated identity |
| First-person attribution | Third-person attribution |
| Subjectivity of self | Subjectivity of others |
| Focalization | Aspectuality |
| Introspection | Theory of mind |
| Stream of consciousness | Continuing consciousness |
| Interior monologue | Bakhtinian dialogicality |
consciousnesses are continuing while, at any single point in the narrative, only one consciousness is being focalized.

The internalist/externalist framework is also helpful in expanding our awareness of the implications of the concept of subjectivity. As the list suggests, the term can be used in both a first-person way (subjectivity of self) and a third-person way (subjectivity of others). The term *situated identity* locates selfhood and identity between the two. Aspectuality acts as a reminder here too, this time of the existence of the subjectivity of others, as available to us through the use of our theory of mind. The concept of aspectuality is a way of bringing to center stage previously marginalized characters whose voices may not often be heard. Knapp (1996) has applied the techniques of family systems therapy to D. H. Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers* (1913) in order to reinterpret the emotional landscape of that storyworld from the point of view of Paul’s father. This is an unusual perspective because the focalization in the novel (through Paul, who has a difficult relationship with his father and tends to side with his mother) does not encourage it.

An important part of the social mind is our capacity for *intermental thought*. Such thinking is joint, group, shared, or collective, as opposed to *intramental*, or individual or private thought. It is also known as *socially distributed*, *situated*, or *extended cognition*, and also as *intersubjectivity*. Intermental thought is a crucially important component of fictional narrative because, just as in real life, where much of our thinking is done in groups, much of the mental functioning that occurs in novels is done by large organizations, small groups, work colleagues, friends, families, couples, and other intermental units. Notable examples include the army in Evelyn Waugh’s *Men at Arms*, the town in William Faulkner’s “A Rose for Emily” (1930), the group of friends in Donna Tartt’s *The Secret History* (1992), the villainous Marchioness de Merteuil and the Viscount de Valmont in Laclos’ *Les liaisons dangereuses* (1782), and Kitty and Levin in Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* (1877), who, in a famous scene, write out only the initial letters of the words that they wish to use but who nevertheless understand each other perfectly. However, these are only a few of the most notable examples. My argument is that intermental units are to be found in nearly all novels. It could plausibly be argued that a large amount of the subject matter of novels is the formation, development, maintenance, modification, and breakdown of these intermental systems. As storyworlds are profoundly social in nature (even Robinson Crusoe has his Friday), novels necessarily contain a good deal of collective thinking. However, intermental thought in the novel has been invisible to traditional narrative approaches. Indeed, many of the samples of this sort of thought that follow in later chapters would not even count as examples of thought and consciousness within these approaches.
But shared minds become clearly visible within the cognitive approach to literature that underpins this book.

A good deal of the significance of the thought that occurs in novels is lost if only the internalist perspective is employed. Both perspectives are required, because a major preoccupation of novels is precisely this balance between public and private thought, intermental and intramental functioning, and social and individual minds. Within this balance, I will be emphasizing social minds because of their past neglect. In illustrating the importance of the functioning of the social minds in my main example texts, *Middlemarch*, *Little Dorrit*, and *Persuasion*, I aim to show that it is not possible to understand these novels without an awareness of these minds as they operate within their storyworlds. They are one of the chief means by which the plots are advanced. If you were to take all of the social thought out of these three novels, they would not be comprehensible. So, given the importance of this subject to the study of the novel, it seems to me that it is necessary to find room for it at the center of narrative theory.

I will take one example from many in order to illustrate the issues that may arise from an overreliance by literary critics on the internalist perspective. I have chosen *Reading the Nineteenth-Century Novel: Austen to Eliot* (2008) by Alison Case and Harry E. Shaw, because it is an excellent study that contains many valuable internalist insights. (For example, it points out that Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* [1847] starts with a tight, uncontextualized focus on Jane’s consciousness and explains how revolutionary this decision was within the evolution of the nineteenth-century novel.) But, more troubling from an externalist perspective, Case and Shaw also remark on “how difficult it is for people to be simply themselves in any social setting” (2008, 24). These questions occur to me: Why assume that the self can only be found (or easily found) in solitude? Could it not be the other way round? Is it possible that we are only really ourselves when with others? When we are alone, are we not more easily tempted to construct convenient, comfortable, easy-to-live-with narratives for ourselves that may be distortions of reality? Similarly, Case and Shaw talk about *Wuthering Heights*’s “conflicting fantasies of escape from, or reconciliation with, the multiple restraints of selfhood that enable a stable, social world” (2008, 68; my emphasis). (Although this appears to be an objective description of the novel, I sense authorial agreement too.) Well, that is one way of looking at selfhood. Another, more externalist way is to see the social world as providing the possibilities for, or affordances for, the expression of selfhood.

Within the real-mind disciplines of psychology and philosophy there is a good deal of interest in the mind beyond the skin (as opposed to the mind inside the skull): the realization that mental functioning cannot be under-
stood merely by analyzing what goes on within the skull but can only be fully comprehended once it has been seen in its social and physical context. Case and Shaw put the point nicely in their otherwise internalist study when they speculate about Walter Scott’s wish to “reveal human nature, not from the skin in, but from the skin out” (2008, 37). Social psychologists routinely use the terms mind and mental action not only about individuals but also about groups of people working as intermental units. So, it is appropriate to say of these groups that they think or that they remember. James Wertsch explains that “the notion of mental function can properly be applied to social as well as individual forms of activity” (1991, 27). As he puts it, a dyad (that is, two people working as a cognitive system) can carry out such functions as problem solving on an intermental plane (1991, 27). It is significant that cognitive scientists are now beginning to share the interest of social psychologists in the mind beyond the skin. For an overview of the work being done in the new research area called social neuroscience, see *The Neuroscience of Social Interaction: Decoding, Influencing and Imitating the Actions of Others*, edited by Chris Frith and Daniel Wolpert (2004).

You may be asking what is achieved by talking in this way, instead of simply referring to individuals pooling their resources and working in cooperation together. The advocates of the concept of distributed cognition such as the theoretical anthropologists Gregory Bateson (1972) and Clifford Geertz (1993), the philosophers Andy Clark and David Chalmers (1998) and (2009) and Daniel Dennett (1996), and the psychologists Edwin Hutchins (1995) and James Wertsch all stress that the purpose of the concept is increased explanatory power. They argue that the way to delineate a cognitive system is to draw the limiting line so that you do not cut out anything whose absence leaves things inexplicable (Bateson 1972, 465). To illustrate, Wertsch tells the story of how his daughter lost her shoes and he helped her to remember where she had left them. Wertsch asks: Who is doing the remembering here? He is not, because he had no prior knowledge of where they were, and she is not, because she had forgotten where they were and was only able to remember by means of her father’s promptings. It was therefore the intermental unit formed by the two of them that remembered (Sperber and Hirschfeld 1999, cxxiv). If you draw the line narrowly around single persons, and maintain that cognition can only be individual, then things remain inexplicable. Neither on their own remembered. If you draw the line more widely, and accept the concept of an intermental cognitive system, then things are explained. The intermental unit remembered. The same applies not just to problem solving but also to joint decision making and group action. Here is a simple example from Evelyn Waugh’s *Vile Bodies* (1930) that I will use again when explaining the philosophical concept of action in
chapter 4: “The three statesmen hid themselves” (86). The decision to hide is an intermental one that is taken together by all three individuals, and the action of hiding is also one that they perform together.

Intermental cognitive systems are, to some extent, independent of the individual elements that go to make them up. This is not to say that the whole is necessarily greater than the sum of its parts; it is simply to say that it is different from the sum of its parts. One example of this difference is the vivid metaphor with which I began this chapter and which was used by the author Edith Somerville to describe her writing partnership with Martin Ross: a question of “mixing blue and yellow which together makes green.” Something similar happened when the poet John Ashbery wrote a novel with James Schuyler in the 1950s, each contributing a line or two at a time. In the diary section of the *Times Literary Supplement* (5 December 2008), the diarist wondered which of the two wrote the line “Why don’t you admit that you enjoy my unhappiness?” The following response from Ashbery was published two weeks later: “In regard to the line in question, I can’t remember. Schuyler and I were often unable to remember who had written what, as our lines seemed to emerge from an invisible third person” (*Times Literary Supplement* [19 December 2008]). There are musical examples too. Keith Rowe, a member of the free improvisation group AMM, once told me that while the group was playing, he would sometimes not know whether it was he or another member of the group who was producing the sounds that he could hear.

However, in considering the wide-ranging nature of intermental functioning (problem solving, decision making, coming to ethical judgments, and so on), it should be borne in mind that analyses of this sort of thought should involve no preconceptions about its quality. Intermental thought is as beautiful and ugly, destructive and creative, exceptional and commonplace as intramental thought. The communal creativity described in the previous paragraph should be balanced against, for example, the scapegoating tendencies of many groups, and also against Pentagon “groupthink.”

An emphasis on social minds will inevitably question these twin assumptions: first, that the workings of our own minds are never accessible to others; and, second, that the workings of our own minds are always and unproblematically accessible to ourselves. This book will, in the main, question the first assumption and will make much less reference to the equally questionable second, although the subject does come up occasionally (as in the *Men at Arms* case study that follows). But in disputing the first-named assumption by discussing the public minds that are to be found in *Middlemarch, Little Dorrit*, and *Persuasion*, I must stress that I am certainly not saying that fictional minds are always easily readable. Sometimes, they are;
sometimes, they are not. In these three novels, I will argue, they frequently are. In other novels, especially those of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, however, different levels of readability and unreadability will apply. For more discussion on this, see Porter Abbott’s “Unreadable Minds and the Captive Reader” (2009).

In an illuminating article titled “Diagramming Narrative,” Marie-Laure Ryan uses diagrams as a semiotic tool for the understanding of narrative in relation to three aspects of plot—time, space, and mind. On the question of mind, she refers to the subject matter of narrative as the “evolution of a network of interpersonal relations” (2007, 29) and convincingly shows how diagrammatic representations of these networks can add a good deal to our understanding of the narrative process. She illustrates this approach with two highly technical analyses, one of a minimal, two-sentence narrative and the other of the fable “The Fox and the Crow” (which was also used in Ryan 1991). It seems to me that a modified and necessarily greatly simplified variant of this sort of approach could be used to analyze the workings of social minds in whole novels. For example, the complex interrelations between different intermental units can be thought of as resembling the patterns made by Venn diagrams, in which overlapping circles are used to express the relationships between classes of objects. Such a diagram would show that the memberships of some groups are completely included within larger ones, some might have no overlap of membership with any others, others would have partial membership overlaps, and so on. With at least some of the novels to be discussed later, it would be possible, though difficult, to construct Venn diagrams that could vividly illustrate this complexity in visual terms.

Little narratological work has been done on social minds in the novel. Exceptions include studies of aspects of distributed cognition by John V. Knapp (for example, 1996) and also by the postclassical narrative theorists David Herman (2003a, 2003b, 2007a, 2008, and 2010) and Uri Margolin (1996b and 2000). The exploration of “we” narratives (that is, narratives written predominantly in the first-person plural) that was initiated by Margolin and continued by Brian Richardson (2006) has produced rewarding results (see, for example, Marcus 2008). A welcome and related development has been the important work done by the literary critic Susan Sniader Lanser in *Fictions of Authority* (1992), in which she focuses on the concept of communal voice. Her use of the term voice shows that she is concerned with the relationship between “we” narration and “I” narration in which one speaker represents others. That is to say, she explores the telling, the mode of narration, the discursive practices of the novels that she discusses. Lanser writes persuasively about some of the important issues raised by the
notion of communal thought such as the problematic erasure of differences between individuals and the need to make speculative and potentially mistaken assumptions about the thoughts of others. I want to take a more inclusive approach, however, and set these issues as well as some of the more positive ones arising from intermentality into a wider context. Most of the nineteenth-century novels that feature plentiful evidence of shared thought have heterodiegetic narrators and are not therefore examples of a communal voice. The studies mentioned above are pioneering, but they have focused in the main only on the relatively small number of narratives written in the “we” form; my point is that little attention has been given to the much larger group of what, in response, I would call “they” narratives: that is, narratives that feature social minds.

You may be feeling some doubt about this claim regarding the neglect of intermental thought. Surely we have always known about the importance of groups right from the beginning of Western literature. What about the role of the chorus in Greek tragedy? Well, yes, undoubtedly, but my claim is that this knowledge has not been reflected in the theory on mental functioning in narrative. Obviously, we all know about the proverbial vox populi, both in literature (especially in drama) and also in our daily lives, but the purpose of the present book is to examine the socially situated or intermental cognition lying at its basis and the various ways in which it is represented in narrative. What about Menakhem Perry’s masterly analysis of William Faulkner’s short story “A Rose for Emily” (1979), in which the townspeople as a group play such an important role? Perry’s article is a groundbreaking contribution to our knowledge of the role of cognitive frames in the reading process, but I do not think that it was part of his intention explicitly to recognize the status of the town as an intermental unit. That is the purpose of this book.

A TYPOLOGY

Obviously the extent, duration, and success of intermental activity will vary greatly from occasion to occasion. Because this is such a wide, relatively uncharted area in the context of literary studies, the following, rather basic typology may be of some value.

1. Intermental encounters. At the minimal level, this consists of the group thought that is necessary for conversations between individuals to take place. It is not possible to have a coherent dialogue without at least some intermental communication. A minimal level of mind reading and
theory of mind is required for characters to understand each other and thereby make everyday life possible. It is made easier or more difficult by a variety of factors such as solipsistic versus emotionally intelligent individuals, easily readable versus impenetrable minds, familiar versus unfamiliar contexts, similar versus different sorts of social background, and so on. A heightened awareness of the mental functioning of another can occur within random encounters between people who do not know each other particularly well or even between complete strangers. I am sure that most readers of this book will have had the experience of meeting somebody for the first time and instantly feeling that you are both on the same wavelength. A focus on the workings of long-term, stable intermental units such as couples and families as itemized below can give a misleading impression if it suggests that intermental thought can only occur within such units. As we know from our real-life experience, mind reading can occur in a variety of situations. Sometimes, it is what might be called reciprocal: there is a conscious and fully intended sharing of thought and so people will know that others know what they are thinking. At other times, it is inadvertent: someone may reveal their thoughts without meaning to. In these cases, that person may not know that their mind has been read by another person, or they may notice that it has been, for example by the other’s facial expression.

In addition to our various encounters with countless strangers and acquaintances over the course of our lives, we all belong to intermental units. I would define these as stable, fairly long-lasting groups that regularly employ intermental thinking. They vary greatly in size, and I will adopt the rather simplistic approach of referring to them as small, medium, and large units. Obviously, many other, rather more sophisticated typologies are possible. John V. Knapp (personal communication) has suggested one that would measure group membership along a scale of interpersonal intensity. For example, someone may feel an intense involvement in the unit formed by their work colleagues but may have a much more distant relationship with their own family.

2. **Small intermental units.** Characters tend to form intermental pairs and small groups of various sorts such as marriages, close friendships, and nuclear families. It is likely that, over time, the people in these units will get to know quite well what the others are thinking. However, these small groups will obviously vary greatly in the quality of their intermental thought, and readers’ expectations may not be met. Many fictional marriages have much less intermental thought than one might think (depending on the level of one’s expectations in this matter, of course). For an excellent analysis of the small intermental unit of a mar-
riage, see Elena Semino’s “Blending and Characters’ Mental Functioning in Virginia Woolf’s ‘Lappin and Lapinova’” (2006).

3. Medium-sized intermental units. The intermentality that occurs between the individuals in medium-sized units such as work colleagues, networks of friendships, and neighborhoods is rather different from the one that arises in random encounters and small units. Here, the emphasis is less on individuals knowing what another person is thinking, and more on people thinking the same way (whether or not they know that others are also thinking that way). Examples that are highlighted in later chapters include some of the subgroups of the Middlemarch mind in chapter 3, the Circumlocution Office in chapter 4, and the party to which Anne Elliot belongs in chapter 5.

4. Large intermental units. Individuals are also likely to belong to larger groups that will also have a tendency to think together on certain issues and so produce a collective opinion or consensus view on a particular topic. To pursue this point in greater depth would be to take this study into concepts such as ideology that are well beyond the scope of this book. The dynamics involved in large groups are similar to those that govern medium-sized units. Examples from the novels studied in future chapters include the town of Middlemarch, “Society” in Bath (Persuasion), and the important role that the public plays in the passage from Little Dorrit that is discussed at the end of chapter 4.

5. Intermental minds. These are intermental units, large, medium, or small, that are so well defined and long-lasting, and where so much successful intermental thought takes place, that they can plausibly be considered as group minds. Couples who have been together for a long time, who know each other’s minds well, and who are able to work well together on such joint activities as decision making and problem solving are the best examples. However, larger groups may also acquire some of these characteristics. Though well defined, these groups will contain individuals who will often be completely different from each other. Opinions will inevitably differ widely on the point at which a particular collection of people can be regarded as sufficiently stable, well-functioning, and distinctive to be defined as an intermental mind. I will argue that the town of Middlemarch, a large unit, may be called an intermental mind, together with some marriages such as the Crofts in Persuasion and the Meagles in Little Dorrit.

The simplicity of this typology hardly begins to do justice to the complexity and range of the intermental units to be found in novels. Nevertheless, it does have some value in providing a map, however rudimentary, by
which this unfamiliar territory may be initially explored. It is obvious that there is a wide spectrum of phenomena covered by the term *intermental thought* and also by this typology: it ranges from chance encounters between two strangers to the life of a whole town over a long period. I do not see any harm in this, as long as we remain conscious of it. The priority is to establish the viability of the externalist perspective on fictional minds as a whole. Then it will be possible to specify the intricate complexities that can be revealed by that perspective. In his review of Dorrit Cohn’s inspirational study *Transparent Minds*, the narratologist Brian McHale said that the “history of our poetics of prose is essentially a history of successive differentiations of types of discourse from the undifferentiated ‘block’ of narrative prose” (1981, 185). These wise words have guided me throughout my narratological studies. I see the first book as having hacked off a huge, previously undifferentiated block of prose and labeled it *fictional minds*. This current stage involves detaching a smaller but still sizeable chunk (labeled *social minds*) from the fictional-minds block, for the purpose of reducing it further into ever smaller and finer fragments. The intention is that, by these means, the work may eventually, over time, become progressively less industrial and heavy-duty in nature and rather more craftsmanlike.

As with all other aspects of the reading process, we bring our real-world cognitive frames to bear when we encounter fictional intermental units. As I say, these frames will entail the default assumption that our theory of mind works better with spouses, close friends, and immediate family than it does with total strangers. We assume that the attributional success rate will be higher than average in such relationships. Within the externalist perspective, it is not surprising that we often know what other people are thinking. It is not a question of occasional sudden flashes of insight, but of a steady pattern of shared thought processes resulting in fairly accurate prediction rates. This pattern is, of course, regularly disrupted by intermental breakdowns, sometimes serious, and my intention is certainly not to minimize the importance of these breakdowns. As I will repeat at regular intervals throughout this book, it is a balance. Sometimes, as we shall see, the default slots are filled; sometimes, when our assumptions are wrong, they are not. When there are frequent misunderstandings or a fundamental lack of communication, the reader has to reconsider the nature of the relationship and amend the frame. In extreme cases, such as Anne Elliot’s relationship with her father and older sister, and Clennam’s with his mother, major reconstruction, such as the use of a new, dysfunctional-family frame, is quickly required.

I have found that some literary scholars tend to react with initial skepticism and even hostility to the idea of intermental thought. However, it is my experience that this hostility tends to wear off with time, to be replaced by
curiosity and even enthusiasm. Others are interested from the beginning in
the concept of intermental thought, but resist the concept of an intermental
mind. It is a step too far. But there is really little difference between what I
have in mind for the concept of an intermental mind and what these skep-
tics are prepared to accept. Intermental minds consist simply of individual
minds pooling their resources and producing different results. Have a look
again at the definition of an intermental mind that I gave above and ask
yourself whether you disagree that couples can get to know each other so
well that they are frequently “of one mind” and can solve problems together
very efficiently. I doubt that you do. So what we are really talking about is
whether the use of the term mind is appropriate for this mutual cooperation.

While considering this question, it is worth bearing in mind the functionalist
perspective on mental life that is characteristic of a good deal of
the cognitive sciences and that asks what thinking does, what it is for. In
questioning what constitutes a mind and what does not, this perspective has
an extremely liberating effect because it leads you to question what is meant
by a mind. Artificial-intelligence (AI) researchers look at the mind in term
of outputs, or what the brain does. They therefore investigate whether these
outputs can only be produced by wetware (that is, the physical composition
of the brain) or whether the same results can also be obtained from com-
puter hardware. And once your concept of mind is flexible enough for you to
question the commonsense assumption that the physical brain is necessary
to the production of a mind, you are then free to wonder whether a mind can
also consist of more than one brain.

In his famous “Chinese Room” thought experiment, John Searle (1980)
asks us to imagine someone who cannot understand Chinese but who is put
into a room containing some Chinese writing together with instructions for
handling this writing. The instructions say what writing should be passed
out of the room as answers to particular questions. Using these instructions,
the person is able to “answer” questions written in Chinese even though he
or she does not understand that language. From the outside, the room looks
like a thinking mind because when questions are submitted to it, they are
correctly answered. (I can cite a similar sort of case from my day job. I am
able to produce perfectly adequate minutes of meetings despite having had
very little understanding of what was being discussed. I am being serious.)
Searle’s point is that computers function in the same way as the Chinese
room. They appear to work as minds do, but in fact they do not. He wishes
to undermine the claim of the “strong AI” argument that computers can
have minds. John Searle’s Chinese Room experiment is controversial, and
people disagree vehemently over its significance. Can you regard the (non-
Chinese-speaking) individual-plus-the-writing-plus-the-instructions as a
“mind”? Most people would not. But if you are one of those, how do you explain the fact that the brain is also made up of equally blind, unknowing elements? Within the brain, consciousness is distributed across constituent modules that are just as incapable of independent cognition as the various elements that go to make up the Chinese room. Why not just talk of these individual modules pooling their resources to produce better results? Well, we do, except that we have a single word for this process—the mind.

Some of the philosophers and psychologists who subscribe to the notion of socially distributed cognition are also interested in another aspect of the mind that is called physically distributed cognition: “our habit of off-loading as much as possible of our cognitive tasks into the environment itself” (Dennett 1996, 134). Andy Clark calls this process *Supersizing the Mind* (2009). It is achieved mainly through tools such as pen and paper and computers. However, in a less obvious sense, we also make use of our whole environment as a cognitive aid. In her seminal study *The Art of Memory*, the historian Frances Yates describes how ancient orators used parts of the auditorium as memorial reference points for sections of their oratory. On a more mundane level, when we are in our own homes, we know where everything is and our cognitive functioning runs smoothly; when we are put into an alien environment, the quality of our thinking can suffer. Dennett convincingly illustrates the importance of physically distributed cognition to old people when he describes how they tend to become disoriented when taken out of their own homes and put into the unfamiliar environment of a nursing home. As Dennett says, “Taking them out of their homes is literally separating them from large parts of their minds” (1996, 128). Examples of physically distributed cognition are mentioned in the following chapters. Within the context of the present discussion, it may be regarded as the argument that a mind can correspond to a brain plus inanimate objects. Yet another opportunity for flexibility in one’s conception of the mind is the doctrine of behaviorism, which can be interpreted, in a certain sense, as the argument that when we talk of the mind, we are talking of (the behavior of) the body.

The more you read of philosophical and psychological debates such as these, the more flexible your concept of mind becomes, whether by breaking it down into its constituent elements, or by building it up (that is, distributing it) to include external elements. To summarize, there are at least four different ways in which the cognitive sciences can open up our thinking about the mind and, in particular, loosen the rigid correspondence of one mind to one brain. These are as follows:

- A mind can be realized by machinery: one mind corresponding to no (wetware) brain;
A mind can be interpreted in terms of behavior: one mind corresponding, in a certain sense, to one body;
• A mind can be physically distributed: one mind corresponding to one brain plus inanimate objects; and
• A mind can be socially distributed: one mind corresponding to more than one brain.

Within this context, I hope that the use of the term \textit{mind} to refer to a group may not seem so surprising. To put the point simply: the mind is a fuzzy concept.

Even so, you may be wondering how intermental units are able to survive Occam’s razor, the principle that entities should not be multiplied beyond necessity. Why create a new entity of an intermental unit instead of simply talking of individuals? I would turn the question around and point out that the advocates of socially distributed cognition are postulating one theoretical entity (the intermental unit, made up of two or more different elements) to explain a joint mental operation, whereas the traditional view posits at least two (the sum of the individuals involved). So Occam’s razor should apply to the internalist rather than to the externalist position.

Some skeptics argue that cognitivists put old wine into new bottles. I acknowledge that there are points in this book where an analysis in the noncognitive language of mainstream literary theory would produce similar results (for example, the discussions in chapter 4 of the role of the face, nonverbal communication, and the look). However, I would argue that the cognitive orientation displayed in this study links together disparate, previously only partially visible aspects of the novel and combines them into a complete cognitive theory of social fictional minds. Within this theoretical framework, new insights into these various elements, even those that are capable of noncognitive explanations, will, I think, emerge.

\textbf{CASE STUDY: MEN AT ARMS}

I will now illustrate some of the concepts discussed so far in this chapter and the previous one by applying them to a short passage of text. I will attempt to reveal what I think are important insights into this passage by approaching it from the following four perspectives: storyworlds, theory of mind, intermental thought, and unconscious thought. My example text is one of the great passages of twentieth-century English literature: the description of Guy Crouchback’s departure from Italy at the beginning of Evelyn Waugh’s \textit{Men at Arms}. Crouchback is leaving his family home outside the Italian village
of Santa Dulcina delle Rocce on the eve of the Second World War in order to go to London to enlist in the army. As he is driven away, he thinks about the Italian word simpatico (meaning sympathetic in the sense of congenial, compatible, or of similar mind or temperament):

He was not loved, Guy knew, either by his household or in the town. He was accepted and respected but he was not simpatico. Grafin von Gluck, who spoke no word of Italian and lived in undisguised concubinage with her butler, was simpatica. Mrs Garry was simpatica, who distributed Protestant tracts, interfered with the fishermen’s methods of killing octopuses and filled her house with stray cats.

Guy’s uncle, Peregrine, a bore of international repute whose dreaded presence could empty the room in any centre of civilization—Uncle Peregrine was considered molto simpatico. The Wilmots were gross vulgarians; they used Santa Dulcina purely as a pleasure resort, subscribed to no local funds, gave rowdy parties and wore indecent clothes, talked of “wops” and often left after the summer with their bills to the tradesmen unpaid; but they had four boisterous and ill-favoured daughters whom the Santa-Dulcinesi had watched grow up. Better than this, they had lost a son bathing from the rocks. The Santa-Dulcinesi participated in these joys and sorrows. They observed with relish their hasty and unobtrusive departures at the end of the holidays. They were simpatici. Even Musgrave who had the castelletto before the Wilmots and bequeathed it his name, Musgrave who, it was said, could not go to England or America because of warrants for his arrest, “Musgrave the Monster,” as the Crouchbacks used to call him—he was simpatico. Guy alone, whom they had known from infancy, who spoke their language and conformed to their religion, who was open-handed in all his dealings and scrupulously respectful of all their ways, whose grandfather built their school, whose mother had given a set of vestments embroidered by the Royal School of Needlework for the annual procession of St. Dulcina’s bones—Guy alone was a stranger among them. (15–16)

The four issues (storyworlds, theory of mind, intermental thought, and unconscious thought) resolve themselves into the following simple statements:

- The passage constructs a fictional storyworld that readers have to gain access to in order to understand the narrative.
- Readers gain access to this storyworld primarily by trying to follow the workings of the minds of the characters described in it, and, in par-
ticular, by following how these characters try to follow the workings of each other’s minds.

- One of the minds that is active in the passage is the collective or group mind of the inhabitants of the town.
- Some of the thinking that this group mind does is unconscious.

I will now explain the background to each of these statements in turn.

Readers employ the notion of the storyworld when they say of novels, as we all do, that they are “true to life” or “realistic,” or that they are “inconsistent” or “farfetched,” and so on. When we say things such as these we are positing the existence of a storyworld and then comparing it to our own real world. Let us try the real-world/storyworld comparison on this beautiful piece of writing. I think it is likely that, when we do, the reaction of many readers will be “How true! It’s so accurate, so true-to-life. That is how people behave! Life is unfair!” But what do we mean when we say these things? After all, we are talking about a semiotic construct: an imaginary town peopled by imaginary characters. Well, we mean that this imaginary world is like the real world in certain important ways, but what is the relationship that is conveyed by that single, simple word “like”?

The storyworld described in the passage consists in part of physical spaces containing various objects. Let us have a detailed look at this world. It is set in Italy and the Second World War is about to begin. It contains taxis, households, towns, butlers, fishermen and fishing nets, octopuses, houses, cats, uncles, bores, pleasure resorts, funds, parties, clothes, bills, tradesmen, rocks, holidays, arrest warrants, language, religion, ways of doing things, grandfathers, schools, mothers, vestments, processions, bones, and strangers. I have listed these elements in such exhaustive and slightly surreal detail in order to illustrate how dense even short descriptions of storyworlds can be. The passage that contains these thirty-odd elements is less than three hundred words long. Even the most apparently simple reading process involves a number of complex cognitive operations. An obvious point follows, but it is one that is well worth making explicit: in order to understand the passage, in order to reconstruct this storyworld, the reader has to know what taxis, butlers, and fishing nets are. As the length of the list shows, a good deal of this sort of real-world knowledge is required for narrative comprehension. But, in addition to knowing what these things are, we also have to be capable of the many inferences contained in the language that describes them if we are to achieve full understanding. When the text says that Uncle Peregrine could empty a room, we have to work out what this really means: everybody knows that he is so boring that people leave the room hastily when they see him in it.
Because it is obvious that this storyworld is like the real world in the sense that all of the objects contained in it exist in reality, we are able to apply to it what Marie-Laure Ryan calls the principle of minimal departure (1991). That is, we assume that any narrative storyworld is like our own until the text provides evidence of such departures from the real world as magical or supernatural entities or events. Her concept is a description in different terms of the default values contained in the frames that we apply to fictional texts. Our assumption that the storyworld will not depart from the real world unless we are told otherwise is a default position. So, when we study a narrative, we look for the clues that will tell us in what ways, if at all, the storyworld created by that narrative differs from the real world. The default position applies in the case of *Men at Arms*, where there are no magical beings with supernatural powers.

However, a further comparison between the storyworld and the real world is required. In addition to consisting of physical spaces and objects, storyworlds also comprise the minds of the characters who inhabit those spaces: Guy and the other people who live in the town. Although the sense of place and the existence of objects are important, these fictional minds are far more so. If I am right that reader responses to the passage will tend to go along the lines of “Life’s just like that!” then these responses would be concerned with fictional minds. Spaces and objects usually have significance only insofar as they affect the mental functioning of the characters in the storyworld. Just as our real minds always operate within a physical and social context, so fictional minds always operate within the specific social and physical context of their storyworld. The fishing nets, the taxis, the cats, and the location of the town are important because they mean something to the fictional minds of the characters who experience those things. Does the principle of minimal departure apply to these fictional minds just as it does to the physical objects? How do the minds described in the text correspond to what we know of our own minds and what we know of the minds of other people? Do the characters behave like real people? These questions bring us to the next issue: theory of mind.

Just as the physical spaces and objects of the storyworld are experienced by characters, so readers also interpret the events that take place there as characters’ experiences. The Wilmots’ flight from the town is not simply an event. It is something that is experienced by the Wilmots because it is an action that they take. They arrive at the belief that they have run out of money; they have the desire to escape the consequences of their lack of money; and they come to the decision that it would be in their best interests to take the action of leaving the town. It is also an experience for the town. It watches the departure with relish because it is using its own theory of
mind on the Wilmots. It has followed the causal mental network that I have just described, and therefore understands why they are leaving. Finally, and more indirectly, it is an experience for Guy. He, presumably, has also followed the thinking behind the Wilmots’ action, and he is also aware of the inexplicably tolerant attitude of the town toward it. The death of the son is another obvious example of an experience for both the family and the town. (By the way, to get back to intermental minds for a moment: please note that I have been talking quite naturally here about both the Wilmot family and the town as joint or group minds. I wonder whether any reader of this book who was having difficulty with the theory presented earlier in this chapter thought to themselves while reading this paragraph: “How can a group of people such as a town or a family have a collective mind?” I doubt it. What may seem bizarre in theory can often seem perfectly natural in practice.)

The Men at Arms storyworld is aspectual. Like the real world, it varies depending on the diverse aspects under which it is viewed, and its characters can experience it only from a particular perceptual and cognitive aspect at any one time. The storyworld will therefore appear different to, and be experienced differently by, the various minds of the characters. Guy has a set of knowledge, values, opinions, beliefs, and so on that differs substantially from those of the other people in the passage. The notion of simpatico forms an important part of his mind because he so keenly feels its absence, whereas it appears that it does not form part of theirs. Guy obviously knows much more about the town than the Wilmots do as he has taken the trouble to study it. He is respectful and knowledgeable about it; they flaunt the fact that they are not. He therefore views the storyworld as it relates to the town completely differently from them. In fact, the whole Men at Arms storyworld is so aspectual in nature that the Guy storyworld is a substantially different one from the Wilmots’ storyworld. His town is a different town from theirs. (I pursue this point further when I talk about the “Lydgate storyworld” in chapter 3.) Even this, though, is an oversimplification. The contrast so far has been with the Wilmots, but they are not the only other people in this passage. More generally, the notion of simpatico is one that Guy shares with the whole community. Indeed, it is plausible to speculate that he gets it from that community. In other words, even his intramental thought has an intermental component.

You may be thinking that I have gone too far. “We are only talking here about 298 words on the page. The proper names contained in those words refer only to literary constructs. We should not talk about them as though they’re real people.” I would fundamentally disagree. In recognizing their status as semiotic constructs, we do have to approach fictional characters in similar ways to real people. We have to hypothesize, speculate, and theorize
in precisely the way I have been doing and will be doing in order to make any sense of the 298 words. When we enter a storyworld, we have to try to fill the gaps in it. Guy's relationship with the town is a prelude to the rest of the novel, which is concerned with his relationship with his army regiment. If we do not understand the former, we will not understand the latter. The relationship with the army is explored in much greater depth and over a longer period, but the initial cognitive frame provided by the passage I am discussing here helpfully illuminates the problematical nature of his future army career.

As the passage represents Guy's thoughts and is seen from Guy's point of view, it is focalized through Guy. But look again at this sentence: "Better than this, they had lost a son bathing from the rocks." If the sentence is taken in isolation, the phrase "better than this" is extraordinary. How can it be better for a young boy to die? It cannot be better for the narrator that the Wilmots have lost their son, and it is obviously not better for the Wilmots that they have. The focalization in this case is complex. One approach is to say that it is better for the town, in the sense that his death makes the Wilmots even more simpatico. On this view, the Wilmots are being presented from the town's point of view: the description of the event is focalized through the town. So, although the whole passage is focalized through Guy, this specific intermental focalization is embedded within Guy's focalization. But an alternative and richer interpretation is that the focalization continues to be Guy's: it is he, not the villagers, who is thinking (resentfully) "better than the daughters, there is the dead son" because that loss makes the vulgar Wilmots more simpatico with the villagers than he is. His awareness of the villagers' response to the son's death influences his judgment here, but it is he, not the villagers, who is the focalizer. Saying that it is the villagers who are thinking "better than this" makes them seem awfully callous, and that runs counter to what we learn in the next sentence: "The Santa-Dulcinesi participated in these joys and sorrows." A further complication is that you can also hear in that sentence the ironic timbre of the voice of the cool and dispassionate narrator of the novel.

To put my general point another way, it is revealing to analyze fiction in terms of levels of intentionality. (This term is used in the philosophy of mind quite differently from its usual meaning to refer to the "aboutness" of mental states. Such states nearly always have some content, are directed at something, are about something.) In this sentence, I have counted five levels of intentionality:

1. The narrator presents
2. how Guy experiences
3. how the town experiences
4. how the Wilmot family experiences
5. the fact that the son experienced his fatal accident.

So, this apparently simple sentence of only twelve words (“Better than this, they had lost a son bathing from the rocks”) contains a complex set of several different levels of thought. Note in particular, though, that the second and fifth levels relate to individual minds while the third and fourth levels relate to group minds. This leads us on to the next point.

An internalist perspective will not by itself tell us much about the mental functioning that is going on in this passage. True, it will show that the text is describing Guy’s individual, private feelings, but after that, it is not much use. Only an externalist perspective will reveal, for example, that the town has an intermental mind, that the cognitive functioning of the individual characters is apparent to the town from their action and behavior, and that Guy’s feelings make sense only when understood as a reaction to the feelings of the town. The passage is not just about the intramental functioning of one individual, and not just about the intermental functioning of the town: it is about the complex, dialogical relationship between the two. What do I mean by referring to the mind of this town? Look again at the passage and at the range of cognitive functioning of which this group mind is capable. It has known Guy since infancy. It does not love him because it does not find him simpatico, but it does accept and respect him. It finds Guy still a stranger. It does find simpatico the other individuals who are listed in the passage. It can forgive those others their faults. It watches the Wilmot daughters grow up. It participates in the joys and sorrows of the Wilmots. It observes “with relish” their departures. It has its language, its religion, and its ways. How can an entity that is capable of such wide-ranging and sophisticated cognitive functioning not be called a mind?

I would now like to talk about some of the ideas on unconscious thought that are developed in a fascinating book by the psychologist Timothy Wilson called *Strangers to Ourselves* (2002). The notion of unconscious thought is not central to this book. I am talking about it here simply to illustrate that the social-minds approach is a versatile one that can be taken in many different directions. A good deal of work has been done by a number of psychologists on unconscious thought, but I am using Wilson because he synthesizes this work in a clear and approachable way. Although he discusses only individuals, it will be illuminating, I hope, to apply his ideas on the role of the unconscious to the thinking of groups. I will be arguing that, because the workings of the town’s mind have a significant unconscious element, the town judges people in the same way as the intramental unconscious mind,
the town’s attitudes to individuals are conditioned by feeling rules, and, as a result, the town has dual attitudes toward Guy and the other individuals. (The two italicized terms are explained below.) And, most importantly, these features account for what is most remarkable and distinctive about the passage—its counterintuitive and apparently paradoxical quality.

The unconscious thought that I will be discussing consists of much more than just the Freudian unconscious of psychoanalytical theory. (I referred to this wider concept in Fictional Minds as nonconscious thought, precisely in order to differentiate it from the Freudian unconscious. However, I will talk about “the unconscious” here because that is what Wilson calls it.) Here are three examples of this much wider category of unconscious thought. First (2002, 164), Wilson quotes an estate agent as saying that she always listens carefully to what her clients tell her about the sort of house they want to buy. She then completely ignores what they have said and simply watches them as they react to the different sorts of houses they visit. Often, a very different picture of their real wants emerges. The estate agent finds the evidence of what customers do much more reliable than the evidence of what they say. In the second example (2002, 85), students were asked if they would buy a flower as part of a campus charity event and eighty-three percent said they would. In fact, only forty-three percent did. When they were asked whether other people would buy a flower, their prediction (of fifty-six percent) was much more accurate. In a similar sort of study, people predicted that they would donate an average of $2.44 of their earnings to charity and that other people would donate $1.83. The actual figure was $1.53. The final example (2002, 101–2) is an extraordinary one. Young men were approached by an attractive young woman in a park and asked to take part in an experiment. During the discussion, she gave them her phone number. Some of the men were approached while negotiating a flimsy and scary footbridge over a deep gorge and others while sitting on a park bench. Sixty-five percent of the men on the footbridge called her and asked for a date, while only thirty percent of the men on the bench did so. Why the difference? The researchers predicted that the men on the footbridge would mistakenly attribute their beating hearts, shortness of breath, and perspiration to physical attraction rather than just fear of falling off the bridge, and this appears to be exactly what happened.

Psychologists such as Wilson conclude from this evidence that people are often simply mistaken about the nature of their own mental functioning. They think with their conscious mind that they are going to do one thing, but, because the decisions are in fact taken by their unconscious mind, they end up doing another. For this reason, we are often much more accurate in predicting other people’s behavior than we are in predicting our own.
According to Wilson, “There is no direct access to the . . . unconscious, no matter how hard we try . . . It can thus be fruitless to try to examine the . . . unconscious by looking inward. It is often better to deduce the nature of our hidden minds by looking outward at our behaviour and how others react to us and coming up with a good narrative” (2002, 16). What Wilson is saying is that our private thought is often not immediately accessible and available to us. We have to infer what we ourselves are thinking in much the same way as we infer what other people are thinking. We deduce the nature of the workings of our unconscious mind by looking outward at the behavior that results from it. That is what Guy does in deducing that his behavior has made him non simpatico to the town even though his conscious mind has tried so hard to be simpatico. So, although thought can be private and inaccessible to others (no one else will know exactly what thoughts Guy is having in the precise form in which he is having them), thought can also be public and available to others. The workings of the individual minds of Grafin von Gluck, Mrs Garry, and the Wilmots are visible to the town and to Guy, and the workings of the town’s intermental mind are visible to Guy as well. In particular, he believes from the behavior of the townspeople that they find others simpatico but not him. This is the externalist perspective in practice.

The notion of unconscious thought can also usefully be linked, not just to specific mental events, but also to the concept of dispositions. According to Wilson, the nineteenth-century psychologist William Hamilton “wrote extensively about the way in which habits acquired early in life become an indispensable part of one’s personality. These mental processes are said to constitute a kind of ‘automatic self’ to which people had no conscious access—an idea that was not to reappear in psychology for more than 100 years” (2002, 11–12). Hamilton argued that our dispositions become part of our unconscious mind. It is in this way that the town has acquired habits of thought that have become an indispensable though unconscious part of its intermental personality.

Am I right in saying that the town has unconscious feelings and does not have any direct access to them? Let us speculate. Imagine an inhabitant of the town being asked to make his or her feelings explicit, and therefore conscious: “How do you feel about Mr Crouchback? Do you like Mr Musgrave more?” I find it quite likely that they would then be conscious of what they are supposed to feel and so reply that certainly they like Mr Crouchback as much as Mr Musgrave, if not more. However, that is the sort of insincere reassurance that people feel they have to produce in order to be polite. So let us put the hypothetical question to the inhabitants in a different way and ask them, as Wilson suggests, to analyze their behavior. “Do you behave in a less open and more reserved way towards Mr Crouchback than towards Mr Musgrave?” It seems quite plausible to me that they would be genuinely surprised to hear
that this was a possibility and that Mr Crouchback had noticed any difference. Their conscious minds would find it difficult to recognize the behavior that has resulted from the workings of their unconscious minds.

The unconscious is “a spin doctor that interprets information outside of awareness [and that] does a reasonably accurate job of interpreting other people’s behaviour” (Wilson 2002, 31). “One of the most interesting properties of the . . . unconscious is that it uses stereotypes to categorize and evaluate people” (2002, 11). In doing so, it is fast, unintentional, uncontrollable, and effortless (2002, 49). Specifically, it has a tendency to jump to conclusions, and often fails to change its mind in the face of contrary evidence (2002, 55–56). This sounds to me like a fairly good description of the cognitive functioning of the town. It certainly categorizes and evaluates people. Precisely how it arrives at its views is a gap in the storyworld, but I would suggest that it is likely to be done in a fast, unintentional, uncontrollable, and effortless way. It is difficult to imagine the townspeople agonizing at length about what they should think about Guy, Grafin von Gluck, and the others. It also seems that the town tends to jump to conclusions and fails to change its mind in the face of contrary evidence. Guy has been trying for twenty years to get the town to change its mind about him and has failed. On the other hand, as I will now go on to argue, it has done a reasonably accurate job of interpreting Guy’s mind.

Wilson points out that, while forming its views, the unconscious can produce feelings and preferences that are not always “rational.” That is to say, the workings of the unconscious have their own rationality, which is often different from the alternative rationality of the workings of the conscious mind (2002, chapter 8). He then draws attention to the resulting difficulty in recognizing the feelings generated by the unconscious mind: “The conscious system is quite sensitive to personal and cultural prescriptions about how one is supposed to feel . . . People might assume that their feelings conform to these prescriptions and fail to notice instances in which they do not. These ‘feeling rules’ can make it difficult to perceive how one’s . . . unconscious feels about the matter” (2002, 129; my emphasis). Wilson refers to the resulting “phenomenon in which people have two feelings towards the same topic, one more conscious than the other, as ‘dual attitudes’” (2002, 132; my emphasis). To illustrate, he quotes from a short story in which two adult cousins reminisce about their childhoods. One of them, Blake, says that he was about thirty before he realized that he had always hated their childhood pony, Topper. “It wasn’t until Blake said it that Kate realized that she, too, had always hated Topper. For years they had been conned into loving him, because children love their pony, and their dog, and their parents, and picnics, and the ocean, and the lovely chocolate cake” (quoted in 2002, 118). This last sentence is a list of feeling rules: children must have positive feelings
about their pony, their dog, and so on. As a result, the cousins had a dual attitude toward the pony: the positive feelings that they knew they were supposed to have according to the feeling rules; and the negative feelings that they subsequently and consciously discovered that they had unconsciously had all along.

The *Men at Arms* passage is a list of feeling rules and also of dual attitudes. It is a list of the reasons why Guy thinks that the conscious mind of the town *ought* to find him simpatico. It is also two other lists: why Guy thinks that the town ought to find the others less so, and why the town nevertheless finds the others more so.

As with individual minds, collective minds can also experience feeling rules and dual attitudes. These feeling rules are implied in all the details that are given about Guy and the others. Every one of the descriptions of the individuals is a reason for disapproval: not bothering to learn Italian, interfering with the fishing, being boring, being gross vulgarians, being a criminal. Every one of the descriptions of Guy is a reason for approval: he speaks their language and follows their religion, and he is open-handed and scrupulously respectful of all their ways. Nevertheless, each of these descriptions is balanced by a conclusion that contradicts it: the others are simpatico; Guy is not. The unconscious mind of the town feels the opposite of what it should feel. It is in this way that every sentence in the passage contains a dual attitude toward Guy or toward the others. This conflict gives the passage its characteristic sense of tension and unease, which arises, as I said earlier, from its apparently paradoxical and counterintuitive nature. The one who seems most likely to be found simpatico is not; all those who seem least likely to be, are. So there are deeper, unspecified reasons at work that must account for the feelings of the town.

I talked just now about the fact that the apparent irrationality of unconscious thought is simply a different rationality from conscious thought. The narrator exploits this difference by making use of readers' assumptions about what they would think the villagers might find simpatico on the conscious level: this is the list of feeling rules. But in the case of the town of Santa Dulcina delle Rocce, these considerations do not seem to rate very highly. Another apparent irrationality is the disregard for the importance of the theory of mind that I discussed earlier. The individuals who are simpatico are not aware of the fact that they are. They do not give the impression that they are particularly self-aware or aware of the feelings of others. Otherwise, they would not behave in such antisocial ways. Guy, on the contrary, tries hard to read the mind of the village and is found to be non simpatico. The moral seems to be that the less you care about being simpatico, the more likely it is that you will be. The reader may then be tempted to conclude that
the fictional mind of the town is irrational. But it is clear, I think, that this is not so. It is simply that the town is employing a different rationality. What is this unconscious rationality? In my view, it is simply a love of life. They favor humanity, facing life with gusto, with self-confidence, with self-belief, and, as the passage says, “with relish.” They like generosity of spirit. Guy is not simpatico because, for all his timid efforts to be liked, he has a poverty of spirit, a meanness of the soul, a meagerness about him that they recognize. This poverty of spirit is evident in the way that he thinks resentfully of the others and especially in the “better than this” phrase that was discussed above. To use a vulgar British expression, he is “tight-arsed.” His life is sterile. In the words of Deuteronomy (30:19), and also of the opening sequence of the film *Trainspotting*, he should “Choose life!” Once this point is realized, the apparent paradoxes dissolve, it is counterintuitive no longer, and the passage makes perfect sense.

**CONCLUSION**

It may be helpful if I conclude this chapter by specifying how much I want to claim for the significance of the topic of social minds in the novel. I argue that this issue looms large as a technique and as a subject matter in all of the novels that I discuss, but techniques and subject matters are parts of novels, not purposes of them. They are means rather than ends. What matters, ultimately, is the purpose to which a particular sort of consciousness representation is put. So my concern in the chapters that follow is with the purposes of presentations of social minds. These chapters are opportunities to expand on the relationship between analyses of collective consciousness and our larger understanding of the whole novel. Put in general terms, I would summarize the purposes of fictional presentations of social minds as follows:

1. Social minds exist in storyworlds because they exist in real life. Our lives consist of a balance between publicly available thought processes and secret and private thoughts. For novels to be worth reading, they have to reflect that balance. Villages and towns tend to behave in reality in the way that Santa Dulcina delle Rocce behaves. An important part of the pleasure that the *Men at Arms* passage gives its readers is the recognition of this fact.
2. The study of social minds sheds a good deal of light on the workings of individual minds. Characters can only be fully understood as elements in complex social networks. Guy’s relationships first with the town and then with his regiment have a key role in his situated identity. People
may have many different sorts of relationships with intermental units: fully assimilated into them; within them, but in conflict with other parts of the unit; outside, and in opposition to them; acting as a public mouthpiece for them; and so on. Some of these relationships will be explored in the chapters to come.

3. Narrative progression is regulated by the flow of information that the narrator of a novel makes available to its reader. This information frequently concerns the workings of fictional minds. Characters have different levels of knowledge of, and understanding of, the storyworld they inhabit. The narrative theorist Lubomír Doležel refers to the storyworld knowledge that characters possess as their *encyclopedias* (1998). These encyclopedias are basic plot motors. Storylines tend to revolve around the consequences of some characters knowing more than others. Characters have an interest in keeping secrets in order to keep the balance of knowledge, and therefore power, in their favor. However, the tendency of social minds is toward the sharing of knowledge. As explored in chapter 5, many nineteenth-century novels are concerned with the practical problems that arise when characters attempt to practice secrecy within distributed cognitive networks in which people can see very easily what other people are thinking.

4. As I said at the beginning of this book, a fierce debate took place within the nineteenth-century novel on the nature of social minds. The epistemological aspect related to the extent to which it is possible to have knowledge of the workings of other minds. The ethical aspect questioned the purposes to which our knowledge of other minds should be put. Social minds raise complex and difficult ethical issues. Characters face sharp and painful dilemmas relating to attempts to exercise control over other minds and the motives in trying to do so. Guy’s predicament has just been discussed. Should Dorothea bend to the will of the Middlemarch mind? Should Anne Elliot in *Persuasion* have been so persuadable? What are the moral purposes behind the gaining of information about other characters’ thoughts? (For example, in *Little Dorrit*, Henry Gowan uses this knowledge to manipulate others.) What are the moral purposes behind trying to conceal one’s own? The reasons for the latter can be immoral (Gowan again) or moral (Anne Elliot concealing her continued feelings for Wentworth). Anne prefers openness except where it would harm herself or others. She knows that Mr Elliot prefers secrecy because he can make use of the resulting control of information and knowledge for his own purposes. Other perplexities will be investigated in the chapters that follow.
CHAPTER 6

Conclusion
(Including Enduring Love)

*Shared minds create all we know.*
—Colwyn Trevarthen

This final chapter is divided into four parts. In the first, I comment briefly on some of the issues that would arise from a rigorously diachronic approach to the study of social minds in the novel. The second part consists of an analysis of the intermental thought to be found in Ian McEwan’s novel *Enduring Love*. In the third section I discuss possible future developments in the study of social minds in narratives in other media. The fourth and final section is, as promised in the first chapter, a rhetorical flourish.

A HISTORY OF SOCIAL MINDS

It is an obvious truth that historical periods are necessarily arbitrary. The novel form does not, of necessity, change utterly at the beginning of each century to suit the classificatory needs of future literary historians. Indeed, it is always necessary to complicate and question such easy and neat categories as “the nineteenth-century novel.” On the other hand, though, it is possible to paint a picture of the history of the English novel that does, as it happens,
fit quite neatly into divisions into centuries. There was a change at the beginning of the nineteenth century, due in the main to the genius of Jane Austen, and it is possible to trace a satisfying line of descent from Austen through Edgeworth and the Brontës to Dickens and Collins, Gaskell and Eliot, and then on to Conrad and James. There was then a very different change at the beginning of the twentieth century with the beginnings of the modernist movement. Many features of the English novel will not fit comfortably into this satisfyingly schematic picture. However, from the externalist perspective on social minds with which this book is concerned, the picture is a genuinely illuminating one. The novel of this period explores the tensions between the internalist and externalist perspectives, between social and private minds, in ways that are noticeably different from both the eighteenth-century novel and the twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century novel. This is not to say that the novels of other periods are not interested in social minds. The differences lie in the degree of interest, and the ways in which this aspect of the novel is presented and examined.

The standard story for the historical development of the representation of consciousness follows what might be termed the speech category trajectory (see chapter 1 for a definition of the term speech category approach). Roughly, this begins with the reliance of narratives before Jane Austen on authorial thought report. Then, from Austen onwards until, say, Henry James, novels are marked by a growing preponderance of free indirect discourse. With the modernist novels of the early twentieth century, stream of consciousness and interior monologue become the dominant speech category modes. Leaving aside any quibbles regarding the accuracy of this history (its possible overestimation, perhaps, of the amount and importance of free indirect discourse at the expense of thought report), it is an indispensable aid to an understanding of the history of the novel. However, if we want a complete picture of the historical development of the representation of whole fictional minds, then the speech category trajectory has to be supplemented by others such as the history of social minds. This narrative might well intersect at a number of points with the speech category account. It could be, perhaps, that Jane Austen was the first great English novelist of social minds, just as she was the first of free indirect discourse. That sounds quite likely to me.

Given that the history of social minds that I envisage would study all of the novelists discussed in this book, as well as many others, as historically embedded figures, several questions would arise. These might include the following: Are the workings of social minds more salient in the novels of the authors examined here than in the other authors of the same period who are not here for reasons of space? And are they more salient than in the novels of earlier and later periods? If the answer to the second question is yes, then further questions arise: Was the nineteenth century a privileged
moment in which these great writers caught the universal condition that we all share and that has since been obscured by assumptions that have limited the power of narrative to expose the full extent of this condition? Or, alternatively, were social minds a unique characteristic of the nineteenth-century British society that was the subject matter of those authors?

Kate Summerscale, the author of *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher or the Murder at Road Hill House*, a work of popular history that was a bestseller in the UK, suggests that the mid-Victorians were fascinated by the idea that faces and bodies could be “read”, that the inner life was imprinted on the shapes of the features and the flutter of the fingers. Perhaps the fascination stemmed from the premium placed on privacy; it was terrifying and thrilling that thoughts were visible, that the inner life, so jealously guarded, could be instantly exposed. (2008, 84–85)

Her theory is that these concerns arose out of the intense public interest during this period in the ability of detectives, both real and fictional, to read suspects’ faces and body language for clues. I am sure that equally plausible alternative explanations could be found. Clearly, any attempt to address the questions asked in the previous paragraph will have to be a major cultural studies research project.

I think that it may eventually be possible to construct historical arguments along these lines in terms of the relationship between narrative technique and cultural conceptions of the self. Such scholarship might involve a revaluation of Dickens as the novelist who captures perhaps more vividly than any other the universal, *trans-historical* fact that, in cognitive terms, we spend almost all of our lives on the surface, on the outside, and who is therefore undeserving of the condescension accorded him by advocates of the more internalist Henry James. On the other hand, it will also have in mind that Jane Austen, George Eliot, Anthony Trollope, and other novelists of the period were also acutely attuned to the workings of social minds. I say that it may *eventually* be possible to construct these sorts of arguments because, while I think that this sort of perspective will be of great value in aiding our understanding of the historical development of the novel, it should only be employed once the necessary detailed textual work has been done on the operation of social minds in a wide chronological range of novels. Once the evidence has been assembled, then such historical patterns will probably become apparent. But it would be unwise, in my view, to theorize too widely and too soon in advance of the textual evidence.

The sort of theorizing that I have in mind could be taken in a number of different directions, social, historical, and cultural. In this context, *The Tragic Muse* makes an interesting comparison with the other, earlier nineteenth-
century novels. Like them (in the main and apart from Dickens), it portrays a homogenous social group—the leisured upper-middle classes. I mention this because being of the same social class seems to be one of the enabling factors for the formation of social minds. Others include being of the same age; characters liking or loving each other; knowing each other for a long time; the absence of solipsistic characteristics, and so on. This is not to say that these factors guarantee social minds, only that they make them a little more likely. But how then can we explain the reasons for the stark differences in perspective between the James novel and the others? The two obvious reasons are that they are written by different people and at different periods of time. But how can we know which factor is the more important? Is it the difference between two aspects of British upper-middle-class society, or simply the difference between Dickens, Eliot, and the others and Henry James? That is assuming, of course, that the novels discussed in this book are typical of their authors, and they may not be; other Henry James novels may be less internalist than *The Tragic Muse*.

Fictional social minds have many other ideological, gendered, historical, and cultural implications that I hope will be explored in the future but cannot be addressed here for reasons of space. One single book cannot go in all the directions that will, I am sure, have occurred to readers of this book. There are many studies of nonverbal communication from a variety of perspectives (anthropological, sociological, sociolinguistic, and so on) that I have not referred to. As an illustration of one important future direction, at the end of the discussion of *Enduring Love* in the next section I refer to the need for a rhetorical and ethical perspective on analyses of social minds. Also, attribution theory can be used to differentiate between the techniques of characterization formation and consciousness representation that are characteristic, not just of different historical periods, but also of genres, authors, and types of characters. Finally, I will discuss later in this chapter my belief that the externalist perspective can fruitfully be applied to narratives in other media such as films and graphic novels. However, any comparative study of the fictional minds realized by contrasting narrative styles, periods, genres, and media should, I propose, pay as much attention to the large number of underlying and persistent similarities as to the marked and undeniable differences.

A history of social minds in the novel will, I am sure, show that an interest in them did not end with the beginning of the twentieth century. This is James Joyce’s characteristically playful take on the subject:

What, reduced to their simplest reciprocal form, were Bloom's thoughts about Stephen's thoughts about Bloom and about Stephen's thoughts about
Bloom’s thoughts about Stephen?

He knew that he thought that he was a jew whereas he knew that he knew that he knew that he was not. (*Ulysses*, 558)

Social minds play an important role in another, very different modernist novel: Ford Madox Ford’s *The Good Soldier*. The unreliable narrator of that novel appears at first to be describing an intermental unit formed by two couples: he and his wife, Florence, and Edward and Leonora Ashburnham. He refers in the second sentence of the novel to their “extreme intimacy” (1) and later to “the swiftness with which intimacy had grown up between us” (40–41). However, he reveals later that, in reality, he knew nothing at all of the true nature of the relationships within this foursome (in particular, that his wife was having an affair with Ashburnham) until after his wife’s suicide. The actual intermental unit comprised the other three, who all shared their knowledge of the real state of affairs. When the focus of attention then moves onto the relationship between the Ashburnhams and their ward, Nancy, the narrator remarks that “that wretched fellow [Ashburnham] knew—by a curious instinct that runs between human beings living together—exactly what was going on” (217). In the final scene of the novel, the narrator is aware that Ashburnham is going to commit suicide but decides not to stop him. “When he saw that I did not intend to interfere with him, his eyes became soft and almost affectionate” (229; my emphasis). There *are* social minds of a sort in this novel, but, as you would expect of a modernist classic, they are partial, fractured, and deeply dysfunctional.

The twenty-first-century novel has so far been characterized by an explicit interest in the workings and, in particular, the malfunctionings of characters’ minds. The first half of Ian McEwan’s *Atonement* is about the development of the thirteen-year-old Briony’s theory of mind and her growing ability to attribute mental states to others. She frequently muses self-consciously on the subject: “Was everyone else really as alive as she was? . . . If the answer was yes, then the world, the social world, was unbearably complicated, with two billion voices, and everyone’s thoughts striving in equal importance and everyone’s claim on life as intense, and everyone thinking they were unique, when no one was” (36). Within two paragraphs, the text refers to “three points of view” (40), “separate minds” (40), “other minds” (40), “different minds” (40), and again to “other minds” (40). Unfortunately, though, catastrophe results from a misattribution by Briony to Robbie. She thinks that Robbie wants to attack Cecilia when in fact he loves her. In contrast to this part of *Atonement*, which shows how Briony’s mind is opening up and acquiring some knowledge of the exis-
tence of other minds (although what knowledge she has does not prevent her from fatally misreading Cecilia’s and Robbie’s minds), in the epilogue, many years later, she realizes that, because of her progressive dementia, “my brain, my mind, is closing down” (354).

The modernist novel is characterized by a move away from the heterodiegetic narration that is typical of the realist novel and toward an experimental and impressionistic emphasis on subjectivity, inner states of consciousness, and fragmentary and discontinuous character construction. These sound like deeply internalist preoccupations. And my guess is that, when the companion volume to this one comes to be written on the twentieth- and twenty-first-century novel, the presence of social minds will be found to be much patchier than in the nineteenth century. However, David Herman’s chapter on the modernist novel in his edited collection The Emergence of Mind illuminatingly examines the modernist novel in terms of situated or distributed cognition. In any event, it should be stressed that the absence of social minds is as significant as their presence. If social minds in twentieth- and twenty-first-century fiction are fractured, attenuated, or even absent, then that, in itself, is an important fact.

I have maintained throughout this study that both perspectives, the internalist and the externalist, are necessary for a full picture of the workings of fictional minds in novels. In my view, this is as true of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century novel as it is of the nineteenth. The purpose of the discussion in the following section is to enrich, deepen, and complicate the picture of social minds that was presented in the earlier chapters on nineteenth-century canonical novels. I will now jump to the contemporary period in order to show that the concerns of the previous chapters are still relevant. I do this by giving a single example of a social-minds analysis of a modern novel. I have chosen Ian McEwan’s Enduring Love for this purpose. McEwan is a good choice because his work reflects an interest in the whole history of the novel, even as he works in both modernist and postmodernist ways to represent fictional consciousness. As shown above, he is a novelist who has a self-conscious interest in fictional minds. The energy of Enduring Love is keyed to the subject of intermentality and, in particular, to the attribution breakdown within the intermental unit formed by the couple at the heart of the novel (Joe and Clarissa). We readers, as interpreters, are drawn into this breakdown if we assume, from the beginning, that the relationship between Joe and Clarissa will be robust enough to withstand the shock caused by the eruption of a mad person into their lives. It may well be that pressures and shocks of this sort will be found by a history of fictional social minds to be characteristic of the modern novel.
ENDURING LOVE

The character-narrator of this novel, Joe, is a popular science writer who, following a hot-air balloon accident in which a man dies, is stalked by a young man, Jed Parry. Jed is in love with Joe and believes that Joe is in love with him. Joe comes to understand that Jed is suffering from de Clerambault’s syndrome or erotomania (a real complaint), which causes the sufferer to fall in love with someone who is usually older and of a higher social status, and who, sufferers often think, sends them signals of their love, for example by drawing their curtains. Sufferers typically stalk their victims and often attack them when they are rejected. However, Joe’s partner, Clarissa, does not take Jed seriously, is skeptical of Joe’s concerns, and thinks that Joe should have handled Jed better. The police are also unhelpful. After an unsuccessful attempt on Joe’s life, Jed threatens Clarissa with a knife and Joe shoots and wounds him. Jed is then detained in a psychiatric hospital. At the end of Joe’s narrative he and Clarissa are separated. The novel ends with an academic paper on the case (apparently thought to be genuine by some reviewers) which mentions briefly and in passing that Joe and Clarissa are later reconciled.

My purpose in discussing this novel is to examine the nature of the attributions of madness to Jed by Joe and Clarissa, and to show how these attributional differences cause the breakdown of that couple’s intermental unit. I conclude the discussion with an analysis of Clarissa’s character—and, in particular, the question of whether her behavior is sufficiently motivated or not—from a number of different aspects: characterization theory, empathy, rhetorical and ethical criticism, and gender studies. It is in this way that I will be looking at the process by which attributions (a cognitive term) become judgments (an ethical term). Put bluntly, I think McEwan’s treatment of the character of Clarissa does not work. This section is, therefore, intended in part to show that a social-minds approach can form the basis of aesthetic appraisals of texts that bear a greater resemblance to mainstream literary criticism than the earlier, rather formalist and descriptive treatments of the nineteenth-century novels. (For a persuasive and highly productive disagreement with my position on Clarissa from a rhetorical perspective, see James Phelan’s “Cognitive Narratology, Rhetorical Narratology, and Interpretive Disagreement: A Response to Alan Palmer’s Analysis of Enduring Love” [2009].)

I referred in chapter 1 to the debate about whether people regard their lives as narratives and whether this is a good thing. Enduring Love contributes to this debate by repeatedly and explicitly drawing attention to its char-
acters’ attempts to make sense of and control their experiences by turning them into narratives. Four different perspectives on the storyworld of the novel are directly presented in the text:

- Joe (the bulk of the text consists of his first-person narrative);
- Clarissa (one chapter is written by Joe but focalized through her; and her letter to Joe is also reproduced within Joe's narrative);
- Jed (two of his letters to Joe are also reproduced); and
- the authors of the academic article that follows Joe's narrative.

These perspectives comprise narratives that, in different ways, account for, and try to make sense of, the events that occur in the storyworld. Unsurprisingly, it emerges that life is aspectual. The words narrative and story recur continually, and even rather heavy-handedly, as ever-present reminders of aspectuality throughout the text. A minor character, Mrs Logan, has a “story” (122), “a narrative that only grief, the dementia of pain, could devise” (123). Joe asks whether Jed believes “in his private narrative” that he was sparing Clarissa’s feelings (144). “It was only when they reached us that our story could continue” (173). “I had my story” (196). “I want to hear this story at first hand” (224). There are references to the “narrative compression of storytelling” (213) and “Lacy’s story” (220). And this is just a selection. Given this plethora of stories and narratives, an objective view of the aspectual events of the storyworld will not be possible. To reinforce the point, the impossibility of such objectivity is referred to twice: “There could be no private redemption in objectivity” (181); and, “Besides, there isn’t only ever one system of logic” (214). This point becomes particularly significant when Joe’s reliability as a narrator of the events in the storyworld is called into question.

Both Joe and Clarissa obsessively retell the story of the accident. They turn it into a narrative. They are shown to be “circling it, stalking it, until we had cornered and began to tame it with words” (29). Reinforcing the need to “tame” events by means of narrative, Joe says later that, “Over the days and weeks, Clarissa and I told our story many times to friends, colleagues and relatives” (36). During this period, “our story was gaining in coherence; it had shape, and now it was spoken from a place of safety” (36). (Incidentally, this process is rather reminiscent of Briony’s narrativizings, her continual and self-conscious retellings and reshapings, of the events in Atonement.) When describing Jed’s request that they pray together, he tells “the prayer story as comedy” (30). The need to narrativize the accident lessens once the event has been tamed: “Talking the events over with friends no longer seems to help because, she thinks, she has reached a core of senselessness” (80).
Joe also likes to narrativize other events. Just before the murder attempt in the restaurant, Joe confesses that “I would have liked to tell the story of my encounter with Inspector Linley, spice it up a little and squeeze some amusement from it” (164). His need to narrativize is also apparent after the restaurant shooting: “A day or so later it became a temptation to invent or elaborate details about the table next to ours, to force memory to deliver what was never captured . . . It also became difficult to disentangle what I discovered later from what I sensed at the time” (166). So much so that some of the details that he gives to the police are later contradicted by others.

As Joe is a popular science writer, his job consists of narrativizing science: “I can spin a decent narrative out of the stumblings, back-trackings and random successes that lie behind most scientific breakthroughs” (75). But he is ambivalent about his work because he wants to be a “real” scientist and occasionally makes unsuccessful attempts to get back into serious science. In particular, he feels revulsion at the professional necessity to narrativize his subject: “Narrative—my gut tightened at the word. What balls I had written the night before” (56). He feels guilty about his dishonest methodology: the use made of a small number of convenient examples together with a total disregard for the many other counterexamples. In his science writing, as with his urge to spice up and tell as comedy his narratives of the events in his life, he is imposing an arbitrary and aspeсtual framework on the inchoate flux of facts and events.

Because of his occupation, Joe has a tendency to come up with scientific explanations for things. Some of these relate to the question of attribution. When Joe is waiting at the airport for Clarissa and looking at the other people in the crowd, he decides that the expressions on their faces confirm “Darwin’s contention that the many expressions of emotion in humans are universal, genetically inscribed” (4). Later, there is a long and general scientific discussion on the age-old question of whether we can ascribe behavior to nature or nurture (70–77). These discussions form a context for the specific attributional problems that are caused by madness. The notion of madness arises from the difficulty in reliably projecting mental states onto others. To say that behavior is obsessive, mad, or insane is to admit that it is not possible to ascribe reliable motives, reasons, and intentions for actions, and so other explanations must be found. When the standard process does not work, the default explanation is “he must be mad.” Mad people have unreadable minds; they do not have social minds. There is a significant emphasis in the text on madness as a complete, self-contained, solipsistic world that sane people cannot enter: Jed’s “world was emotion, invention and yearning” (147); “His was a world determined from the inside, driven by private necessity, and this way it could remain intact . . . He illuminated the world with his
feelings, and the world confirmed him at every turn his feelings took” (143). “He was inviolable in his solipsism” (144). The scientific paper explains that, as a “well-encapsulated delusional system” (238), “erotomania may act as a defence against depression and loneliness by creating a full intrapsychic world” (239).

As Joe is initially unable to narrativize Jed’s behavior according to the usual rules, he characteristically seeks a scientific explanation. At the first mention by Jed of Joe drawing his curtain, it is apparent to Joe that the curtains have an attributional significance for him. “A curtain used as a signal. Now I was closer than before. I almost had it” (92). Joe has a faint memory of the importance of the signal from the “lover” for de Clerambault sufferers, but cannot quite place it at first. Finally he remembers the existence of de Clerambault’s syndrome: “The name was like a fanfare, a clear trumpet sound recalling me to my own obsessions. There was research to follow through now and I knew exactly where to start. A syndrome was a framework of prediction and it offered a kind of comfort. I was almost happy . . . It was as if I had at last been offered that research post with my old professor” (124; my emphasis). He is deeply relieved when he is able to attach a scientific label to this disruptive and inexplicable event in his life. He sees Jed’s behavior as “a love whose morbidity I was now anxious to research” (127; my emphasis). The point is reinforced even more strongly a little later: “Studying Parry with reference to a syndrome I could tolerate, even relish, but meeting him yet again, in the street, especially now that I had read his first letter, had frightened me” (130; my emphasis). Although “comfort,” “happy,” and “relish” are odd words to use in this context, the reader knows why he uses them. He feels reassured by his knowledge: “I had read the literature and knew the possibilities” (153). He now has some control over the situation. Also, he makes it explicit that part of the reason for his frantic scientific study of Jed’s madness is to bring him closer to Clarissa again: “What could I learn about Parry that would restore me to Clarissa?” (128). And he feels better even though the conclusions are not necessarily reassuring in themselves, and do not appear to suggest that any such control is going to be possible: “Well over a half of all male de Clerambaults in one survey had attempted violence on the subjects of their obsessions” (142).

Having found a coherent narrative that can serve as an explanation for Jed’s behavior, it is also important for Joe that, in addition, it be narrativized as criminal. Joe stresses that “Parry’s behaviour had to be generalised into a crime” (73). However, it is noticeable that this move is always resisted by everyone else associated with the case. Clarissa certainly does not see Jed as a criminal, and she never takes seriously the possibility that he might become violent. Joe’s narrative also differs from the official one. After Joe describes Jed’s behavior to a policeman, he is told that it is not possible to establish
that what Jed is doing is against the law. The response is that “There’s nothing here that’s threatening, abusive or insulting as defined by Section Five of the Public Order Act” (157). The aspectual nature of the narrative that Joe has constructed for Jed is thereby given additional emphasis.

Joe’s theoretical or scientific interest in Jed’s mental illness may in part explain his dilemma over how to deal with the madman. Joe frequently engages with Jed and then immediately experiences a marked desire to disengage. Their encounters are characterized by a continual seesawing of movement toward him, then withdrawal. “What do you want?” Even as I said the words, I wanted them back. I did not want to know what he wanted, or rather, I did not want to be told” (59). Sometimes Joe gives in to his undeniable feelings of curiosity and also pity. At other times he withdraws and refuses to humor him in any way. He agonizes a good deal over this recurring pattern. “I was quite interested to know, although I also wanted to get away” (64); “I should have walked on, but his intensity held me for the moment and I had just sufficient curiosity to echo him” (65); and “I had decided to say nothing more to him, but I couldn’t help myself” (68). Joe’s ambivalence has serious consequences for his relationship with Clarissa when she accuses him of leading Jed on. Joe links the two issues of scientific curiosity and attributional failure when he says that “When this story was closed it would be important to know something about Parry. Otherwise he would remain as much a projection of mine as I was of his” (60). There is a laudable awareness here of one of the chief pitfalls in the attribution process—the temptation to project one’s self into others. This is the concern that Clennam has about turning Little Dorrit into a “domesticated fairy.” It could even be argued that Joe goes too far in this direction because, when encounters with Jed go badly wrong, he seems to imagine himself “accused” of “a failed extension into mental space” (128). He appears to feel guilty that he does not realize immediately that Jed is mad. But why? This seems to me to be an overreaction. It is surely praiseworthy to be reluctant to attribute madness too quickly.

Meetings between the two men tend to revolve around the issues of control and intimacy. Jed remarks, “It’s all about control, isn’t it?” (62). Joe is understandably disturbed at the apparent closeness of their relationship. He finds himself “talking to a stranger in terms more appropriate to an affair, or a marriage on the rocks” (67). To his horror, he thinks, “I’m in a relationship” (73). In an oddly intimate form of words, Joe refers to Jed as “my de Clerambault” (207). The use of the possessive when referring to Jed strikes a jarring note. The issues of power, control, and intimacy become an important element in the conflicts between Joe and Clarissa when she begins to have doubts about Joe’s handling of the situation: “Was I giving her the impression that I was secretly flattered by Parry’s attention, or that I was unconsciously leading him on, or that without recognising the fact, I was enjoying
my power over him, or—perhaps she thought this—my power over her?” (102).

It is hardly surprising that the group of people including Joe and Jed who are suddenly thrown together in the hot-air balloon accident at the beginning of the novel do not form an intermental unit. What is more surprising, though, is the fact that the narrative explicitly draws attention to the absence of intermentality. Joe states, “I should make something clear. There may have been a vague communality of purpose, but we were never a team” (10). The point is an important one, because he repeats it a few pages later: “But as I’ve said, there was no team, there was no plan, no agreement to be broken” (14). Nevertheless, the academic article that follows Joe’s narrative speculates that Jed’s participation in this loose social unit, however fleeting and ephemeral it may have been, has a profound psychological effect on him. The authors suggest that “Such a transformation, from a ‘socially empty’ life to intense team-work may have been the dominating factor in precipitating the [de Clerambault’s] syndrome” (239; my emphasis). The article is proposing that Jed’s participation in what he thinks is an intermental unit (although Joe does not agree and it is doubtful whether any of the other participants would either) is the proximate cause of his descent into madness. Whether or not this is a plausible theory in this specific case, it is a telling acknowledgment of the power and importance of intermental units.

At the start of the novel, Joe and Clarissa form a fairly well-functioning unit. Initially, their attributions of states of mind to the other appear to be accurate and successful. There was nothing, Joe says, until the Jed affair, that “threatened our free and intimate existence” (8). However, as with most relationships, there are some fine, potential fault lines. One is Joe’s desire to become a real scientist again. Clarissa finds Joe’s occasional unsuccessful attempts to do so rather upsetting because they are doomed to failure and they disturb the equilibrium of their relationship. Another is Clarissa’s inability to have children. Both of them would like to have a family. When these fault lines crack wide open on the impact of the invasion into their lives of a madman, then their relationship ceases to be intermental. The reason for the split is that they attribute different states of mind to Jed. They narrativize him intramentally. They never achieve a stable consensus on this issue. Joe’s attributions, as we have seen, construct a double cognitive narrative for Jed as a threatening, dangerous, potentially violent madman. Clarissa initially denies that Jed is mad at all. She narrativizes him as a joke, implies that Joe is unreliable in his accounts of Jed’s behavior, and trivializes the matter as a nuisance. Then, once she does accept the reality, she sees him as capable of being, in effect, tamed and domesticated. She also alleges that, in any event, it is all Joe’s fault (56–58).
Clarissa's views on Jed, are, on the whole, focalized through Joe. To put the point another way, Joe is exercising his theory of mind on what Clarissa thinks of Jed. Clarissa is only able to speak for herself directly when she writes her letter to Joe, but this letter is placed near the end of Joe's narrative. Joe refers frequently to what he thinks (reliably, in my view) is Clarissa's view of Jed, and tries hard to be convinced by it: “Clarissa was right, he was a harmless fellow with a strange notion, a nuisance at most, hardly the threat I had made him out to be” (61). While in general Joe sees Jed as dangerous, he is constantly aware that Clarissa regards him as harmless and he pays careful attention to her views. “Then he [Jed] represented the unknown, into which I projected all kinds of inarticulate terrors. Now I considered him to be a confused and eccentric young man who couldn’t look me in the eye, whose inadequacies and emotional cravings rendered him harmless. He was a pathetic figure, not a threat after all, but an annoyance, one that might frame itself, just as Clarissa had said, into an amusing story” (69; my emphasis). Later, Jed’s first letter to Joe appears to Clarissa to be “such an unfaked narrative of emotion” (101; my emphasis) that she is convinced that it is Joe who is at fault. However, despite Joe’s attempt to reconcile the two narratives, they soon diverge. Trying on Clarissa’s attributions does not work for Joe for long. In the next passage, written by Joe but focalized through Clarissa, the note of skepticism is unmistakable: “She thinks she understands Parry well enough. A lonely inadequate man, a Jesus freak who is probably living off his parents, and dying to connect with someone, anyone, even Joe” (81). She has constructed a detailed life story for Jed that is fairly accurate, but what she leaves out is his potential for violence.

Joe’s awareness of Clarissa’s ambivalence about Jed’s madness is well caught in this passage: “She seemed to agree with me that he was mad and that I was right to feel harassed. ‘Seemed’ because she was not quite wholehearted, and if she said I was right—and I thought she did—she never really acknowledged that she had been wrong. I sensed she was keeping her options open, though she denied it when I asked her” (100). The reliable mind reading on which any successful intermental unit is based is under threat here. It has become dangerously intermittent. Joe knows that something is not quite right, but he is simply not sure of the extent to which Clarissa’s views on Jed diverge from his own. In particular, he is not sure what Clarissa’s “options” might be. Perhaps the divergence with the greatest impact on their relationship is Clarissa’s insistence on holding Joe responsible, at least in part, for Jed’s obsession. Joe thinks that Clarissa is fooled by Jed’s “artful technique of suggesting a past, a pact, a collusion, a secret life of glances and gestures” (100). In other words, Jed has constructed a (nonexistent) narrative that Clarissa finds plausible. Multiple levels of theory of mind
result: Joe thinks that Clarissa believes that Jed knows that Joe loves him too. In a key statement in her letter near the end of the novel, Clarissa writes to Joe, “I accept that Parry is mad in ways I could never have guessed at. All the same, I can understand how he might have formed the impression that you were leading him on” (218). This is in part because “You went your own way, you denied him everything, and that allowed his fantasies, and ultimately his hatred, to flourish” (218). These first-person views show that Joe was right all along to think that Clarissa had strong reservations about his handling of the affair. Both these statements put a good deal of the blame for the harm caused by Jed’s actions on Joe. What is noticeable about them is how intolerant they are of Joe’s perceived shortcomings. Clarissa certainly cuts Joe no slack whatsoever. I will come back to this point later.

As a result of these intramental divergences, the unit is put under great pressure. The two individuals start to separate. They both acknowledge that it is Jed who has caused the divide. Joe says of the period before he invaded their lives, “Now I could not quite imagine a route back into that innocence” (127). Understandably, he is reluctant to talk to Clarissa about Jed: “Another reason for not talking now of our problem was that we would be bound to let Parry into our bedroom” (145). Clarissa also knows that they are drifting apart: “She remembers too that they love each other and happen to be in very different mental universes now, with very different needs” (82). However, intermentality is still a factor in their relationship. During their row, she realizes that, despite her best efforts, “She has let herself be drawn into Joe's mental state, his problems, his dilemmas, his needs” (85). Nevertheless, Joe refers to “the fine crack of estrangement that had appeared between Clarissa and me” (99). Their attributions of states of mind to each other become judgmental and confrontational. In Joe’s words, “We were hardly at war, but everything between us was stalled . . . To her I was manic, perversely obsessed, and, worst of all, the thieving invader of her private space. As far as I was concerned she was disloyal, unsupportive in this time of crisis, and irrationally suspicious” (139).

Any attempts at communication are inconclusive because they have less knowledge of the other’s mind than they used to: Joe “felt that we had been denied a conclusion . . . I thought that there remained between us an unarticulated dispute, though I wasn’t certain what it was” (101). Joe’s illicit and totally unjustified reading of Clarissa’s letters seems to her to be “a statement, a message, from you to me, it’s a signal. The trouble is, I don’t know what it means” (132). Clarissa tells Joe that a “stranger invaded our lives, and the first thing that happened was that you became a stranger to me” (218). However, it is noticeable from these statements that some vestigial traces of intermental thought remain, even though the gaps between them
widen. They know what they do not know. In Donald Rumsfeld’s phrase, these are known unknowns. What would be even worse, I suppose, would be unknown unknowns: not knowing that they do not know what the other is thinking, and assuming that everything is still fine when it is not. Given these pressures, it is inevitable that, toward the end, they drift apart. Joe refers to the “speed with which this mate, this familiar, was transforming herself into a separate person” (221). He talks slightly of her letter: “I disliked its wounded, self-righteous tone, its clammy emotional logic, its knowingness that hid behind a highly selective memory” (222). As far as both of them are concerned, “The matter of our differences was unbroachable” (223). (However, as stated in a brief aside in the academic paper, they are eventually reconciled and adopt children.)

A powerful irony operating in the novel is the fact that, when the perfectly sane Joe is faced by the mad Jed, both Clarissa and even Joe himself develop doubts about Joe’s own sanity. At one point Joe feels like a “mental patient at the end of visiting hours. Don’t leave me here with my mind, I thought” (58). Clarissa feeds these fears. In the chapter in which Joe speculates about what Clarissa thinks about how his mind is working, he writes (from her point of view): “The trouble with Joe’s precise and careful mind is that it takes no account of its own emotional field. He seems unaware that his arguments are no more than ravings, they are an aberration and they have a cause” (83; my emphasis). Clarissa is wondering hard about Joe’s mental health: “Perhaps Parry, or the Parry as described by Joe, does not exist.” During their row, she says, “You were so intense about him as soon as you met him. It’s like you invented him” (86). “You ought to be asking yourself which way this fixation runs” (86). During another exchange, she exclaims, “I’m talking about your mind.” When Joe replies, “There’s nothing wrong with my mind,” she responds, “Don’t you realise you’ve got a problem” (148). Joe decides that “Now it was settled in her mind I was unhinged” (150). “Clarissa thought that her emotions were the appropriate guide, that she could feel her way to the truth, when what was needed was information, foresight and careful calculation. It was therefore natural, though disastrous for us both, that she should think I was mad” (150). That “therefore” is surely a stretch. Why should Clarissa relying on her emotions and feeling her way to the truth necessarily cause her to think that he is mad?

His alleged mania is linked to his growing sense of loneliness. Because the intermental unit has been broken and Clarissa has doubts about Joe’s sanity, he is alone: “We continued to live side by side, but I knew that I was on my own” (149). “Clarissa thought I was mad, the police thought I was a fool, and one thing was clear: the task of getting us back to where we were was going to be mine alone” (161). “I was on my own” (175). “I felt my iso-
lation and vulnerability” (177). This isolation is self-reinforcing. The more alone he feels, the more Clarissa feels it too: “Your being right is not a simple matter . . . Shoulder to shoulder? You went it alone, Joe” (216). “You were manic, and driven, and very lonely” (217). These discussions about Joe’s sanity and the emphasis on his aloneness will reinforce any doubts about the reliability of Joe’s narration.

*Enduring Love* is an instructive lesson in the aspectuality of narrative and of life generally. It turns out that Joe was right all along to think that Jed was a dangerous madman and that Clarissa was wrong not to take Joe’s views seriously. He was a reliable narrator. Clarissa does not know at the time that Joe is right. Fair enough—we all make mistakes. But for me, the issue is not Clarissa being wrong. It is whether she should believe in Joe more at the time and trust in him more than she does. From her aspectual view of the storyworld, what she undeniably does know is that they have a loving, trusting relationship and that he is intelligent and reliable. So why does she not believe him? Why does she not accept his narrative and, instead, create one of her own? Why does she not accept his attributions to Jed and replace them with hers? What evidence (what T. S. Eliot called the “objective correlative”) is there that this character, Clarissa, would behave in this way? What would justify such a breach of faith by such an intelligent person within such a trusting relationship? How likely is it that this character, Clarissa, would think that this character, Joe, would wish to lead Jed on or even make it all up? How likely is it that she would be so unyieldingly critical of him? Why did she not make allowances for the fact that he is being stalked by a madman? Putting the question even more tendentiously: Is Clarissa’s why-didn’t-you-just-invite-this-homicidal-maniac-in-for-a-cup-of-tea? strategy meant to sound as utterly stupid, inadequate, and pathetic as it does to me?

This discussion of Clarissa’s behavior, and in particular the talk of evidence for the workings of characters’ minds, raises interesting questions about characterization. The evidence that I have been discussing comprises the data that readers slot into the cognitive characterization frame that they create for the Clarissa character. My frame is as follows: a highly intelligent, sensitive, self-aware, and conscientious person who loves her partner, tries hard to behave well, and has a considerable degree of insight into herself, other people, and the mechanics of relationships generally. So, can I account, within this frame, for a person who would immediately be so utterly distrustful of the man that she loves that she instantly jumps to the conclusion that he is making things up? Would not the character that I have created give him some considerable benefit of the doubt? So, what happens next? Should another frame be created? But I am not sure what that other frame would be, given that it would contain data that, to me, seems inconsistent with what is...
already there. So perhaps we simply say that this is a characteristic of the text of this novel that we should simply accept. OK, people are inconsistent, they are complex. We’re not robots. But even though I know this to be true, why do I find it unsatisfying as an answer in this case?

In order to explore this question further, I will summarize Clarissa’s criticisms of Joe as follows:

(1) Joe may be making it all up.
(2) Joe is guilty of leading Jed on.
(3) Joe does not show sufficient empathy for Jed: if Joe had invited him into the house he may not have become violent.
(4) Joe cuts himself off emotionally from Clarissa and goes his own way.
(5) Joe reads her letters.

The last point is easily dealt with. He is wrong to read her letters. This is something that Joe should not have done. It was a morally indefensible act. However, her lack of trust in him had begun before then. The other criticisms deserve closer examination. (1), (2), and (3) appear to be contradictory. If he is making it up, then the possibilities of leading Jed on and not dealing with him properly do not arise. (2) and (3) are equally at odds. Surely, showing more empathy and inviting him into the house would be the clearest possible case of leading him on. As for the substance of (2), Joe is certainly ambivalent about how best to deal with Jed, but whether he can then be said to be “leading him on” seems to me to be debatable. With regard to Joe going off on his own (4), this looks like a chicken-and-egg situation in which, if Clarissa had been more supportive, Joe would not have felt the need to go it alone.

It is sometimes said that the relations between men and women are made difficult by the fact that they are governed by two completely different impulses: men by shame and women by fear. The typical dynamics of arguments between men and women can, it is argued, be explained in these terms. This view might be applied to this case by suggesting that Joe feels shame at the growing closeness and intimacy of his relationship with Jed, and Clarissa feels fearful that Joe is drifting away from her and she is losing the person she loves. “It’s always been a fear that she’ll live with someone who goes crazy. That’s why she chose rational Joe” (83). In addition, there are the underlying tensions in the relationship that I referred to earlier: Joe wanting to go back into real science while Clarissa knows that he has left it too late; and Clarissa’s inability to have children. Perhaps these latent conflicts can explain Clarissa’s behavior, especially if she perceives Joe as irre-
sponsibly attempting to avoid the problems in their relationship by throwing himself into the research into Jed’s condition?

It may help at this point to focus on one particular event: Jed’s first phone call. Joe errs in not telling Clarissa about it at the time and waiting for a day or two before he mentions it. “It may have been exhaustion, or perhaps my concealment was protective of her, but I know I made my first serious mistake” (37). He also explains the delay by saying that it was because he could not cope with it at that time so soon after the balloon accident and he did not want to disrupt the intermental equilibrium that they had only just managed to recover following this accident. (“Would it have been right then . . . to intrude upon our happiness with an account of Parry’s phone call?” [53].) Let us look at this issue first in terms of empathy. (See Suzanne Keen’s _Empathy and the Novel_ [2007] for an extended treatment of this topic.) If I were to put myself into Clarissa’s position, I would find Joe’s explanation satisfactory. I suppose this is because I do that sort of thing myself. I sometimes wait before I tell someone something because I need time to process it myself first. But it seems to me that this is not what empathy is: it is not me trying to imagine being _myself_ in that position; it is me trying to imagine being _Clarissa_ in that position. And to do that, we have to ask: What caused her to behave in the way that she did? In other words, the reader must attribute reasons, causes, motives, and intentions to her actions, bringing us back, once again, to the question of evidence. So we need to return once more to attribution theory.

Our well-researched tendency to overvalue the reasons for actions that focus on the individual (“he did that because he’s that kind of person”) and undervalue those that focus on the context (“he did that because that’s what everybody tends to do in that kind of situation”) is referred to by psychologists as the _fundamental attribution error_. Within this attributional framework, it is possible to see Joe’s decision not to report the call in situational or contextual terms. That is, “Well, anyone in his situation—tired, stressed, wanting a little respite—would have done the same.” It is equally plausible, though, to see the decision as an example of a dispositional fallibility: his need to control the narrative. The combination of Joe’s personality flaw and Clarissa’s understandable fear of loss of intimacy might form the beginnings of an ethical justification of her behavior. But is it enough to set against the contrary case? Is not her distrust a distinct overreaction both to her fear of Joe drifting away and to Joe’s apparent faults? After all, there are worse things in life than being rather controlling. In any event, how much of a control freak is Joe? Agreed, his disposition is to use narrative as a controlling device, but don’t we all? He may have an ambivalent attitude toward Jed because he is curious about the syndrome, but this hardly seems to me to amount to an illegitimate exercise in power and control. And the careful and
respectful attention that he pays to Clarissa’s initial views on Jed is anything but controlling.

At this point I have to confess that, when I read this novel for the first time, and again when I was studying it for the purpose of writing this chapter, I found myself getting angry with Clarissa. This is shaming to admit, but true nevertheless. I thought to myself, How dare she distrust and undermine Joe and leave him, a man alone, to face this homicidal maniac! Why was she not by his side? (My reaction, as you can see, had a rather “High Noon” flavor.) On the other hand, I have been equally conscious of a parallel, contradictory response: this is to doubt that Clarissa’s behavior is sufficiently motivated by McEwan the novelist. I have discussed some of the possible reasons for her behavior—her fear of losing the man she loves, her concern over Joe’s desire to be a serious scientist, her pain at not being able to have children with Joe. Nevertheless, I personally am not convinced by them. For me, they do not fully explain her behavior cognitively (as well as not justifying it ethically). These instabilities do not seem to me to constitute sufficient causes for the dramatic widening of the hairline cracks in their relationship under the impact of Jed’s madness. And, in particular, I simply do not see what evidence Clarissa has for thinking that it may be Joe who is the madman. So, if I cannot find the evidence to explain or justify Clarissa’s behavior, then it seems to me that the choices are these:

- I am an incompetent reader;
- McEwan is an incompetent author; or
- Clarissa is an unethical character.

In other words, the evidence is in the text but I cannot see it, so I am incompetent. Or the evidence is not there and this lack is unintended. This is therefore an aesthetic fault in McEwan the novelist and so he is incompetent. Or the evidence is not there, this is intended, and it therefore shows that Clarissa behaves in an unethical way. She is unjustified in behaving as she does. The question to ask can be simply put: Does Joe do enough wrong? On balance, I would say: no. A more nuanced question is this one: Does McEwan miscalculate in trying to set up a context within which Clarissa’s mistrust of Joe can be understood and even forgiven? I would say: yes.

I wish to end this discussion with a tentative speculation that will take what is already a wide-ranging discussion into the area of gender studies. It is that I suspect that there may be a gender divide in readers over Clarissa’s behavior. That is, I suspect that women readers may tend to sympathize with Clarissa’s concern over what she perceives to be Joe’s erratic behavior and her fear of losing him, while men may be more likely to identify with Joe and his anger at what he perceives to be Clarissa’s disloyalty. The aspectual view
of the novel’s storyworld adopted by most women readers may have more in common with Clarissa’s perspective than Joe’s, and vice versa for male readers. This hypothesis might benefit from some empirical investigation.

SOCIAL MINDS IN OTHER MEDIA

Narratology studies the nature, form, and functioning of all narratives irrespective of their mode or medium of representation. Indeed, many narratological concepts are particularly suited to multimodal analysis (Ryan 2004). As is well known, the story of Cinderella can be told in any number of different discourses or media (a short story, a film, a play, a ballet, a cartoon) and still remain the same story. In considering whether the study of social minds is applicable to narratives in other media, I conclude that it is surprisingly adaptable and is just as revealing about fictional minds across a range of media as it is about written texts. I say that the approach is surprisingly adaptable because it was built specifically for written narratives and, before I undertook this exercise, I expected it to be geared far more specifically to novels than in fact it is. In particular, I think that the sort of approach to narrative outlined in this book is well suited to graphic novels and related narrative forms. In his article “Presenting Minds in Graphic Narratives” (2008), Kai Mikkonen argues that the medium of graphic novels “stimulates the viewer’s engagement with the minds of characters by recourse to a wide range of verbal modes of narration in a dynamic relation with images that show minds in action” (2008, 302). Mikkonen is extremely successful in exploring the nature of that relation. In addition, it strikes me that a social-minds perspective would work really well in film studies. I will now briefly indicate what such a study might look like by commenting on two scenes in The Godfather Part I and a scene from The Usual Suspects.

In The Godfather Part I, Sollozzo, “the Turk,” while putting a business proposition to Don Corleone and his associates, mentions that the rival Tattaglia family will be able to guarantee security. The Don’s son, Sonny, starts to object to the implicit slight to the Corleone family, but the Don stops him with a motion of his hand. (After the meeting, the Don tells him, don’t ever again tell anyone outside the family what you’re thinking.) Following the gesture, there are three split-second close-ups showing the reactions of Sollozzo and two others, Tom Hagen and Clemenza. These lightning-quick shots show in an instant that all three understand perfectly what has just happened: the insiders Hagen and Clemenza know that the outsider Sollozzo knows that Sonny has been humiliated and shown to be an unreliable hothead who is unsuitable to become the eventual head of the family, and
that the Don has been forced to acknowledge this weakness publicly; Hagen and Clemenza are embarrassed by their knowledge; Sollozzo is wondering what use he can make of such knowledge, and so on. And the viewer learns about this substantial amount of mental functioning from a section of the film that lasts about a second.

Later in the same film, another son, Michael, is standing at the entrance to the deserted hospital where his seriously ill father is recovering from an assassination attempt. Michael is with a young baker who happened to be visiting at the same time. Although both are unarmed, they successfully pretend to be gunmen and so the car containing the men who have come to kill the Don drives past. Once the crisis is over, the baker is unable to light his cigarette because his hand is shaking so violently. Michael lights the cigarette with a perfectly steady hand and then pauses for a second, looking with surprise and interest at the steadiness of his hand. The self-attributional process in this case involves the sort of external physical evidence relating to body language that is usually thought to be characteristic of third-person attribution. Michael is taking the advice offered by the psychologist Timothy Wilson in chapter 2 and is deducing the nature of his hidden mind by looking outward at his behavior. He has just discovered something about himself from observing his own body, and this discovery is of great teleological importance to the narrative (he knows now that he has the courage to become the leader of the family). And again, the shot lasts little more than a second.

My other film example is included here in order to illustrate how postmodern and unnatural narratives can complicate, disrupt, and subvert the creation and maintenance of social minds in a fictional storyworld. In the famous climax to *The Usual Suspects* it is revealed that the confession being given in a police station by Verbal Kint, an apparent loser, was untrue in many respects and that he is, in fact, the master criminal Keyser Söze. His interrogator discovers this by seeing that many of the details of Verbal’s story were taken from the office notice board. As much of the film consists of flashbacks illustrating Verbal’s story, viewers find themselves in a similar position to readers of *Atonement*. As an apparently authoritative world-creating narrative has been revealed to be unreliable, how then do we know what really happened?

Let us approach the question systematically. Some of the film is authoritative because it is independent of Verbal’s narrative, in particular the investigation into the shootout on the ship. Of the content of his story, some of the detail is unimportant—his singing in a barbershop quartet and going to Guatemala. Of the rest, two of the characters in the story are revealed to have made-up names inspired by objects in the police station: Kobayashi and Redfoot. Interestingly, though, we see “Kobayashi” drive Verbal/Söze away
from the police station, so, even though his name cannot be “Kobayashi,” we
do at least know that he exists within the whole film storyworld. But what
about Redfoot? Does this character exist at all in the film storyworld? Are the
scenes that feature him pure fantasy? Or does he exist under another name?
We do not know. Also, the gang, the usual suspects of the title, must exist in
the storyworld because the police investigators refer to them. But we do not
know about the conversations between them that Verbal describes, or about
the power relations between them. Most importantly, was Keaton really the
leader of the gang, as Verbal portrays him? So, the fictional minds presented
in the film have been radically destabilized. We do not know whether some
of these minds existed at all (Redfoot), and we do not know whether others
operated in the way that the film shows (Keaton). Oddly, these ontological
and epistemological uncertainties tend to be forgotten when, for example,
Keaton’s characterization is being discussed by film critics. Can we say with
any certainty where Keaton’s identity is situated, when nearly all of what
we know about him is told to us by a proven liar? For the same reason, we
cannot know the extent to which the gang of usual suspects ever became a
social mind.

Another area in which I believe this sort of cognitive analysis would
have rewarding results is in the study of narratives about real minds: history,
biography, and autobiography. Once you are alerted to the internalist/exter-
nalist divide, surprisingly explicit references to it crop up in the most unex-
pected places. The British politician Leo Amery said of the prime ministers
David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill: “LG was purely external and
receptive, the result of intercourse with his fellow men, and non-existent in
their absence, while Winston is literary and expressive of himself with hardly
any contact with other minds” (Times Literary Supplement, page 14, 25 Sep-
tember 2009). It is significant that the so-called group biography is currently
becoming fashionable. These books are based on the premise that it can be
at least as informative to write biographies of groups as of individuals. The
author Richard Holmes made his name by writing conventional biographies
of Shelley and Coleridge, but his book The Age of Wonder (2008), which won
the 2009 Samuel Johnson Prize, is a group biography that examines the life
and work both of the scientists of the Romantic age who laid the foundations
of modern science and of the Romantic poets who responded to the new sci-
ence.

My final example of internalist and externalist perspectives in media or
genres other than fiction is pure self-indulgence. It is simply an excuse to
refer to my first love: American popular music such as blues, jazz, country
and western, soul, and gospel music. Consider the highly contrasting world-
views of two famous country gospel songs. First, the opening verse of a beau-
A beautiful song made famous by the Carter Family called “Lonesome Valley”:

You’ve got to walk that lonesome valley
You’ve got to walk it by yourself
Ain’t nobody here can walk it for you
You’ve got to walk it by yourself

This is internalism taken to a chillingly Beckettian conclusion. By contrast, enjoy the thrillingly externalist chorus of an equally wonderful, and rather more typical, gospel song called “Farther Along”:

Farther along we’ll know all about it
Farther along we’ll understand why
Cheer up my brother and walk in the sunshine
We’ll understand it all by and by

CONCLUSION

In his foreword to a book titled *The Shared Mind: Perspectives on Intersubjectivity* (2008), from which the motto for this chapter was taken, Colwyn Trevarthen asserts that “human life and culture is incomprehensible without intersubjective processes” (2008, vii). His conclusion is that “We need a science of the imaginative fictions persons so easily share” (2008, vii). Trevarthen is actually talking about the real-mind sciences. To take his reference to “fictions” more literally, it could be argued that we already have a “science of imaginative fiction”: it is called narratology. The purpose of this book has been to attempt to add the last four words of his statement to the existing science.

When a phenomenon is identified that does not fit within a well-established paradigm, an anomaly is created. And, as Thomas Kuhn explained in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*:

Discovery commences with the awareness of anomaly, that is, with the recognition that nature has somehow violated the paradigm-induced expectations that govern normal science. It then continues with a more or less extended exploration of the area of anomaly. And it closes only when the paradigm theory has been adjusted so that the anomalous has become the expected. (1996, 52–53)

The widespread and pervasive existence of fictional social minds and inter-
mental thought constitutes an anomaly within the traditional narratological paradigm for the presentation of consciousness in the novel. The proof is the invisibility of intermental thought within the current theory. However, following a more or less extended exploration of this area and of all of the other aspects of the whole of the social mind in action, the paradigm theory can be adjusted to take full account of their importance. Social minds in the novel will then be anomalous no longer; they will be expected.


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